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ABSTRACT

This document consists of 10 monthly newsletter issues, in English- and Spanish-language versions, exploring topics related to early childhood behavior and parenting. Regularly appearing features include book recommendations, "Library Resources," "Preschoolers in the Kitchen," "Kids Crafts," "Research News," and "The Health Corner." Major topics of the newsletter issues are as follows: (1) cultivating children's strengths (January); (2) parents as role models (February); (3) postpartum depression (March); (4) answering children's "big" questions about life (April); (5) single parenting (May); (6) how babies change couples (June); (7) the family stories we tell our children (July/August); (8) the use and misuse of rewards to motivate children (September); (9) developing healthy television viewing habits (October); and (10) helping children deal with disappointments (November/December). (HTH)

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# Parent and Preschooler Newsletter: A Monthly Exploration of Early Childhood Topics, 2003.

## Vol. 17, No. 1-10, Jan-Nov/Dec, 2003

**Sandra Wolkoff, Managing Editor**
**Neala S. Schwartzberg, Editor**

**North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center**
**Roslyn Heights, NY**

**2003**

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Sandra Wolkoff

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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

PP Parent and preschooler

NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

Winner of a 1998, 99, and 2001 Parent's Choice Approval Award

Volume 18, Number 1 | *An International Resource for Professionals and Parents* | January 2003

# All Children Have Gifts

## *Cultivating Your Child's Strengths*

All the children in the preschool are at play but Alex. He is sitting on the sidelines watching as the other youngsters scramble up ladders and climbing toys and slide down chutes. Although he has friends, Alex is simply uncoordinated. A whiz at the computer, he has a hard time mustering the physical strength and ability to keep up with the other youngsters.

Tanya sits at the piano picking out a tune she heard once before. The music begins to flow in and around her as she experiments with notes and chords. Her parents are delighted, but think "if only she could learn the alphabet as easily."

All children are born with strengths. But many will never achieve their potential because their strengths were never encouraged. The potential leader, artist, team-player can only develop when they have the experiences that nurture those gifts.

In the midst of raising a youngster it is often too easy to see what's lacking. A child who can't seem to follow the simplest instructions or has difficulty learning to count, is unable to learn to ride a bike. You want to fix the problems, make your child as good as any and every other child, but in the process that youngster's abilities may be ignored.

There's an important reason to focus on children's strengths rather than on weaknesses. It helps buffer children against stresses, cushioning them in difficult times. They come to value themselves and their abilities and know they can compensate for their limitations. No matter what happens they can believe in themselves and work through their difficulties.

An interest or hobby can also develop into a specialized area of enjoyment that will last a life-time, or even become a career. Some abilities seem to clearly lead to occupations. Good coordination, an aptitude for numbers, or scientific thinking seem to lead naturally to careers in sports/dance, mathematics, or the sciences.

Other talents can enrich a child's life. A child with an interest in collecting rocks may not become a geologist but that interest may become a passion providing much pleasure. If your youngster's abilities are in the area of interpersonal relationships she may be able to find and keep lifelong friends.

### Three Steps to Developing Your Child's Potential

There are three steps to developing your child's potential. The first step is one of our most important parental tasks: identifying the possible areas of excellence that exist in our children.

Once you've discovered your child's strengths, the second step is to point them out so that your youngster becomes aware of them. This step helps your child develop new positive images of herself based on her abilities.

The final step expands your child's potential by helping her develop her strengths to their fullest.



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### • Step One: Identify Your Child's Strengths and Qualities

You begin helping your child recognize that he is important and valued when you identify his special qualities and strengths. Your son might have a talent for music, athletic ability on the soccer field, or artistic capability. His strength could be a mental attribute. He might have a keen memory for details. Or, perhaps it's a social skill of a kind and generous heart. Maybe he has strong knowledge in a particular area such as dinosaurs, rocks, or constellations of stars.

One of the most important things you can do to discover your child's strengths is to put aside your biases. It's important to remember that your child's special strengths may not be your own strengths, or even something you personally value. Instead, try to be open to all the imaginable possibilities.

There are several ways you can discover your child's special strengths.

Think in terms of categories. Think honestly about your child in every way: socially, emotionally, physically, morally, and intellectually. Make a list of your descriptions. Now, look for possible talents and strengths in your child.

Ask others. Talk to others who know and care about your child such as teachers, ministers, friends' parents, baby-sitters, family and friends. Add their opinions to your list.

Observe quietly. Over the next several days silently watch your child in different situations: at school; with friends; playing by herself; with family. Tune into what she seems to enjoy and chooses to do.

Pull from your memory. Look through scrap books, old photos and videos. What were her past birthday and holiday gift wishes?

Talents are often expressed in our interests.

Listen, really listen. Invite your child to join you for some uninterrupted conversation. Talk to her about what she enjoys doing. Is there a special program she'd like to take? Any hobbies or interests?

Poll your family. Brainstorm as a family the special talents of every member.

### • Step Two: Point Out These Strengths So That Your Child Sees Them

Recognizing our children's abilities isn't enough. We must pass our findings on to them. The more you can expand your children's awareness of their qualities, the greater the likelihood their self-confidence will increase as they focus on their positive attributes.

Look at the list of your child's strengths. Choose one or two that you want your child to recognize about himself. You'll need to be able to back up your assertions about these gifts with examples so make sure the strengths are really there and not ones you hope will appear in the future.

Praise the strength only when it's deserved, and point out concrete instances.

"You are so athletic, you climbed up the play equipment with so much grace and ease."

"I didn't know that about dinosaurs, you know so much about them."

"You were so kind to that little boy who was worried that his father was late picking him up. You made him feel much better."

"You're very artistic. Your drawings always have such great detail."

Your child may not be able to see these strengths on his own. Be specific in your praise so that he knows exactly what he did to deserve recognition.

Some children (and adults) may have difficulty accepting the compliment. They discount their achievements. You may need to practice this with your youngster. You may even need to learn to accept a compliment for yourself. The best response when given a compliment is to warmly say "Thank you" or "I appreciate that you told me." Discounting praise with reasons why it isn't deserved is common among adults but rarely appropriate.

### • Step Three: Give Your Youngsters Opportunities To Show and Develop Their Strengths

Team sports offer a chance for physically gifted youngsters. Socially skilled children do well in groups. Budding artists enjoy drawing and craft materials. Encourage your youngster to draw menus for holiday dinners. Put

her artwork up framed in your office. Don't force a reluctant child. Then, it becomes work instead of pleasure.

Encourage your youngster in her interests. You may not find insects fascinating but if your young naturalist does, picture books and a magnifying glass will be appreciated and useful.

## Gifts Can Compensate for Areas of Weakness

Recognizing a child's gifts doesn't mean that you have to ignore areas of weakness. Children who have difficulty learning to read, have poor physical coordination, or lack social skills may indeed need some assistance. But encouraging your youngster's very real strengths enables her to feel good about herself and adds balance for a child who might otherwise see only limitations. She's more than someone who can't ride a bike, she's also a budding pianist. The boy who has a hard time distinguishing the letters of the alphabet is more than a youngster who has trouble learning to read, he is also a gifted comic who makes others see the humor around them.

Further, it's possible to use skills as a way to develop in areas of weakness. For example, children who have trouble learning the letters of the alphabet by name can benefit from drawing them, or making them with their fingers and body.

## It Takes Effort to Become Good at Something

Encourage excellence. Even innate skills need honing. Help your youngster value the time and effort needed to make those abilities blossom. Nothing comes without practice. It doesn't have to feel like a chore, but it takes time and practice nonetheless.

Impress upon your youngster that serious work is rewarded. Drawing may be fun, but getting the drawing to look the way you want it to look still takes effort. Playing the piano, hitting a home run, mastering a computer program, reading, and more require "doing." Very often the process is a pleasure, but it is still a process of perfecting, getting better and better.

This isn't a competition. Don't compare your child to others siblings, friends, or neighbors. Each of our children has gifts and each of our children deserves recognition for their abilities and work developing those gifts.

***Michele Borba, Ed.D. is the author of "Parents Do Make a Difference" (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA, http://www.josseybass.com), and "Building Moral Intelligence: The seven essential virtues that teach kids to do the right thing," Jossey Bass, 2001. Her new book is "No More Misbehavin': 38 Bad behaviors and how to stop them" (Jossey Bass, March, 2003). To learn more about the book go to: www.moralintelligence.com. Borba is the mother of three teenage sons and a former classroom teacher.***

## *Cultivating Intelligences and Gifts*

### Joyful Noise Movement and Sound

**Home-made Tap Shoes**

It's easy to give your kids happy feet. Just hand them an old pair of shoes, some coins, and a tube of heavy-duty glue. That's it. Let them figure out how to arrange the coins on the soles. Wait for the glue to really dry, then turn them loose. Garage, basement, sidewalk, playground, even an old linoleum floor that can't get any worse – they're all perfect places for the budding choreographer. With a radio, CD player, tape recorder, or their own voices for accompaniment, Broadway, here they come.

**Scarf Dancing**

This is a much quieter approach to movement that capitalizes on spatial intelligence. Scarf dancing lets kids see the lines and shapes their bodies make in space, like dragging sparklers through the darkness on the Fourth of July. This is important because essentially dancers are creating structures in space – like architecture. But each line disappears as it's drawn. Holding scarves, kids can see the arcs, spins, and abrupt changes of direction and put the whole structure of the dance together in their heads. By watching the scarf, they can critique and change their movements. Scarves can be tied to the end of sticks to extend the line even more.

**Tower Power**

Very young children instinctively pile blocks up just to see how high they'll go before a spectacular fall. What looks like child's play is the product of logical, spatial, and kinesthetic intelligence. Kids who build towers are thinking every step of the way, managing mass, stress, symmetry, balance and ever-present gravity. It's physics, engineering, and architecture all rolled into one graceful spire.

You don't have to spend any money to have a block set that can grow and grow. It's already in your kitchen cupboards. Recycling most of the cardboard products in your pantry will create a fabulous building set.

Here are just a few possibilities: salt boxes, baking powder cans, spice boxes, oatmeal boxes, shoe boxes, cereal boxes taped shut for stability, Band-Aid boxes, liquor boxes, cracker boxes, coffee cans. You may need to weigh down the lighter boxes if they tip over. When the kids are tired of building, just dump the containers in a large box or plastic garbage bag for storing.

Much like the building blocks made up boxes, kids can make towers of plastic containers. Cottage cheese and yogurt cartons, water bottles, take-out containers, and nested plastic bowls. The towers can be held together with tape, or just piled, pulled down, and piled again.

**Pattern Play**

Being able to spot patterns is a major function of logical intelligence. Kids who are sensitive to patterns have an advantage when they need to analyze, sequence, follow rules, compute, solve problems, see relationships, or reason abstractly.

If that sounds like math, you're right. Patterns are the language of math, but they have an irresistible appeal to kids with robust visual and kinesthetic intelligence. You can see kids' hands start to itch at the sight of a bin full of small wooden blocks, colorful tiles, bottlecaps, and bits of odds and ends. Adults are amazed at how long kids will work at creating beautiful, complex patterns with a good supply of interesting junk.

Get a basket and fill it with: buttons, marbles, ceramic tile samples, pegs, wooden tiles, checkers, bottle caps, playing cards, spools of thread, nuts and bolts, pebbles, sample paint chips (free at the paint store), various types of beans, etc.

**Read All About It Newsprint for Pre-Readers**

Little kids get very excited when they begin to recognize their letters. Sometimes well-meaning parents find themselves buying workbooks and flashcards to encourage reading skills. Unfortunately, some "learning aids" are about as interesting as watching paint dry. Kids either lose interest or rebel, and that's not a great start for a lifelong reading plan. On the other hand, for (almost) no money at all your child can frolic with hundreds of letters in their natural habitat–the words and paragraphs of the front page.

A newspaper has every letter in dozens of sizes, typefaces, and colors. Stick a marking pen in your child's hand and let her circle every A to Z she sees.

Snipping jumbo letters from sale pages and headlines is another great way to start. Kids can cut out heaps of letters and use them like Scrabble tiles to spell first words.

## Getting Smart Through Art

**Edible Sculpture**

Piecrust and ready-to-bake cookie dough have a wonderful texture – soft enough to capture a perfect fingerprint yet sturdy enough to roll into worms and balls. Kids can mold it into cars, kangaroos, or carrots. Add to the fun by experimenting with food coloring. When the fun is done, sprinkle the creations with cinnamon and sugar, add a dot of butter, and bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

☞ *These activities come (with permission of the author) from a truly innovative book "Seven Times Smarter: 50 activities, games and projects to develop the seven intelligences of your child" by Laurel Schmidt; Three Rivers Press (Crown Publishing), New York; $15.00, Softcover.*

📖 We loved this book. It's chock-full of ideas that children can do with little expense and just a bit of thoughtful preparation by parents. It includes background on Gardner's seven kinds of intelligence, but it's also a framework to understand children's skills and interests and how to create a joyful play environment.

Laurel Schmidt has been in education for over 30 years, as a teacher and principal. Currently, she is the Director of Student Services for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School Districts. You can visit her website at:

**www.seventimessmarter.com**

## Moving?

Please remember to send us your new address as soon as possible - we don't want you to miss even one issue!

Give us your old address and your new address and send this info to:
North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; P&pN;
480 Old Westbury Road;
Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215.

**Don't forget** to advise your old AND your new post office of your change of address!

## Research News

*Preschoolers who seek out novel experiences may develop higher intelligence scores*

Toddlers who physically explore their environment, engage socially with other children and verbally interact with adults are likely to have higher scholastic and reading abilities as teenagers compared to less engaged toddlers.

The authors, psychologist Adrian Raine, Ph.D. of the University of Southern California and coauthors ruled out gender, ethnic group and parents' education or occupation as influences on a child's approach to new stimuli.

The authors suggest that young children who actively learn about their environments by exploring, playing with other children, and asking parents questions create for themselves an enriched, stimulating, varied, and challenging environment.

▪ *"Stimulation Seeking and Intelligence: A prospective longitudinal study," Adrian Raine, Ph.D. Chandra Reynolds, Ph.D. Peter H. Venables, Ph.D., and Sarnoff A Mednick, Ph.D. University of Southern California, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 82 (4).*



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# Different Ways to be SMART

It began with Howard Gardner, Ed.D in his book Frames of Mind. Dissatisfied with the limited way we viewed intelligence, Gardner developed a new approach that recognized more kinds of intelligence than those traditionally valued in academic settings. In the process, he challenged the way intelligence was viewed, and perhaps changed it forever.

This is more than another "feel good" approach to raising children. Gardner's conceptualization of intelligence removed the blinders which had been limiting our view. Talents and strengths are all around us.

Gardner also gathered an impressive body of support showing these intelligences are rooted in the structure of the brain and the way we process information.

❖ **Spatial/Visual Intelligence**

These skills are visual talents: drawing, map skills, a good sense of direction. Children strong in visual/spatial intelligence think in pictures and can recreate visual images from memory. They can orient themselves in space, imagine how things look from a different vantage point. When looking up at the sky, these children see pictures in the clouds. When you get lost, they generally know whether to go left, right, or straight ahead. When they become older, they doodle in the blank spaces in their notebook. As adults they are architects, sculptors, and engineers.

❖ **Logical/ Mathematical**

Are your youngsters good at logical thinking? Youngsters strong in this area are problem solvers, or quick with logic games and codes. They ask good questions and think in terms of cause-and-effect. They may enjoy science and understanding why things happen. Youngsters who ask many "why" questions are often scientific/mathematical thinkers. They may be fascinated with baseball statistics and enjoy playing with the meaning of numbers. Scientists and mathematicians rely on this intelligence.

❖ **Bodily-Kinesthetic**

Don't dismiss body skills and strength. These children can control their bodies easily. They may be budding minimalists, able to convey information through their expression and movements. Acting, dancing, sports, all require coordination and grace. They may also be able to handle small objects skillfully. They build structures from cards and toothpicks; pile up blocks into sky-scraping towers; and toss crumbled papers accurately into wastebaskets across the room. Athletes, surgeons, dancers, and crafts people use bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

❖ **Musical**

These are musical talents such as playing an instrument, having a good sense of rhythm. These youngsters respond to music, always banging on table tops, or humming a tune. They hear and remember melodies, can sing harmony and recognize different sounds. They listen to the birds singing outside the window and tap out intricate rhythms on any available surface. Clearly composers and musicians need a strong musical intelligence.

❖ **Interpersonal**

You can think of these as people-smart traits. Children high in this intelligence can sense the moods of others, and are socially-skilled. They can see the world through the eyes of those around them, recognizing others' feelings and intentions. As adults, they become teachers, politicians, psychologists and social workers, as well as salespeople.

❖ **Verbal/Linguistic**

One of the more traditionally prized intelligences, linguistic talents can include storytelling, creative writing, and reading ability. Children high in verbal intelligence tend to learn how to read quickly and easily. They love making up stories, enjoy the sounds of words and their meanings. Good story-tellers in whatever form, are high in linguistic intelligence.

❖ **Intrapersonal**

Does your youngster have insight into her own behavior? Is your son capable of thinking about why he does certain things? Children high in intrapersonal skills understand themselves. They may be introspective and spend time thinking about their actions and motivations.

Gardner's newest skill area is called **Naturalist intelligence**. It focuses on the ability to distinguish among, classify and use features of the environment. This was probably an intelligence highly prized in early humans (along with other areas perhaps under appreciated today). They would be sensitive and aware of plants and animals as well as other aspects of the world around them such as clouds, rocks and flowers, perhaps even the makes and models of the cars on the road.

*Neala S. Schwartzberg,M.D*

🕮 **Learn More About It**

Howard Gardner, ***Frames of Mind: The theory of Multiple intelligences***; New York; BasicBooks; Paperback; 1985; Reissued as the 10th anniversary edition; 1993.

Howard Gardner; ***Intelligence Reframed***, New York; BasicBooks; 1999.

Thomas Armstrong, ***Seven Kinds of Smart: Identifying and developing your multiple intelligences***, New York; Plume (Penguin Putnam, Inc.), paperback; 1999.

# Dear Reader

The title of our feature sums up our attitude towards giftedness: all children have gifts. It may be true that society values some more than others, but that is a limitation of our culture, rather than a reflection of some underlying difference in the inherent worth of these skills.

This month we honor all the ways children (and adults) can be smart. Our feature by Michele Borba, Ed.D. helps us find our youngsters' abilities and nurture them. Laurel Schmidt allowed us to share some of her creative and ability-enhancing activities.

We also have a piece on the theory of multiple intelligences developed by Howard Gardner, Ed.D. whose own ability to perceive the different ways to be smart started a quiet and quite wonderful revolution in the way we view intelligence.

As a parting thought, I'd like to share a quote that has adorned my corkboard for many years. It's from the book *Excellence*, by John Gardner, Ph.D., educator, founder of Common Cause, and former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

*The society that scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.*

May all our pipes hold water, and may all our children's abilities be recognized and applauded.

Heide Schwartzburg

## *His Mother Watched*

**As he grew**
**His mother watched him and**
**Found the things that he and**
**Only he could do.**
**She told him that he was a prince of talent**
**That he had something to give**
**And so he gave his talent to the world**
**And he was happy.**
**And the world was too.**

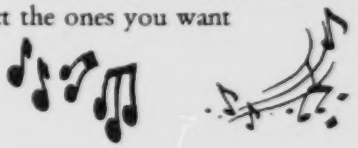
Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour

## *Music for All*

♪ ***Latin Playground***, Compact Disk by Putumayo World Music, http://www.putumayo.com. Another winning, feet-tapping collection by this multi-cultural music company. With songs from Cuba, Columbia, Mexico, and more (even the United States is represented), this truly crosses geographical borders. Perfect for the whole family to enjoy.

♪ ***Ralph's World***, Compact Disk by Mini Fresh, http://www.minifresh.com. Their slogan is "always a favorite" and they are certainly right. Ralph's World is a series of CDs and you can't go wrong choosing any of them. Some of the songs you may recognize, others will become new favorites.

♪ PlayhouseRadio.com (http://www.PlayhouseRadio.com). If you've ever found yourself loving some children's songs and hating others, or at least cringing when you hear them, you'll want to check out this website. Listen to the songs and select the ones you want to make your own personalized CD.



## A Letter to the Editor ...

In a recent issue we asked our readers to send us their comments and concerns. Following is a letter that, with permission, we would like to share with you.

Your October '02 edition, *When Children Grieve*, was excellent, and I am glad to have the list of fairly recent books dealing with loss.

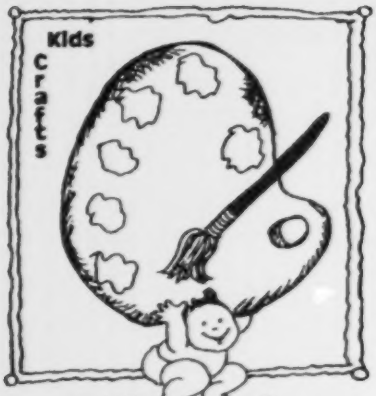
I want to point out what I believe is a significant omission in the article entitled "Pregnancy Loss." Guilt is often a major issue in grieving a miscarriage, since many women blame themselves for having done something wrong to cause the miscarriage.

When any crisis hits, an effort to "understand...what happened, why, and how it might be prevented in the future" (What can I do to feel better?) can aid healing, but I think that in the case of miscarriage, these questions can be counter-productive. It has been estimated that twenty percent of all pregnancies end in miscarriage, despite the fact that most women are conscientious about taking good care of themselves during pregnancy. Grief work after a miscarriage is generally not about gaining tools for increasing the odds of carrying a baby to term (causal understanding and prevention); it is about coming to terms with the fragility of life and the birthing process; letting go of any feelings of self-blame or inadequacy (after all many women experience more than one miscarriage), and looking for the strength and the courage to try again, or to choose a different path.

Sincerely, *Colleen M. McDonald*; Rockford, IL.

Answer: *Thank you for raising an important issue. While there are some causes of pregnancy loss that can be medically addressed, there are many others that are beyond our control. Learning to accept this, and move forward is crucial to emotional healing.*

*The Editors*




# Kids Crafts

## *Imagination Activities*

Play is at the heart of early learning, and crafts are a wonderful opportunity to help kids enter this magical world. Indeed, kids look at the world with fresh new eyes and then use what they see in innovative ways.

This ability to imagine is strengthened through self-expression, and we need to be supportive of the natural creativity that exists in all children. The focus needs to be on the doing. When we offer unhurried time to explore materials we allow our children to put their fingerprints on their projects.

Nurture your children's imagination with these activities and remember the pivotal role you play in cultivating creativity.

### *Simple & Sweet Starbursts*

You will need: Food coloring; Light corn syrup; Craft sticks; Oak Tag. This sticky but finger-licking-good project is bound to tickle most children's fancy and appeal to all the senses as children taste, feel, and see colors.

Begin by spreading a generous amount of corn syrup on the oak tag. Encourage your child to imagine a rainbow and then choose the colors to add to the corn syrup. Have your child randomly squeeze drops of food coloring onto the corn syrup.

The results will instantly satisfying as the colors blend into lovely designs. Depending on how tactilely sensitive your children are they may decide to blend the colors with the craft sticks rather then get messy. Let your children experiment and create their own colors and shapes. Extend the activity by discussing the changes and reading books about colors and shapes.

### *My Buddy Art*

You will need: Craft sticks; Ribbon; Yarn; Scraps of Fabric; Craft Glue; Craft pens; Wiggle eyes. Your child will be enchanted as they dream up their own little imaginary playmates.

First, have your children decide the type of characters they wish to make and plan how to make them. This will foster decision-making and problem solving skills.

Then, prompt your children to begin assembling their little friends. Creating with fabrics combines a tactile experience with the visual. Encourage them to be imaginative and talk as they go maybe adding some ideas for details. Your preschoolers little fingers may need assistance with the finer features.

If they are inspired you can ask them to make several for a collection. These entertaining companions can be used to put on an impromptu extravaganza featuring their new buddies as the star attractions.

### *Silly Squiggle Sculptures*

You will need: Wax paper; Glue; Glitter; Felt-tip Pens; Yarn; ribbon. These silly sculptures are fun and your child will be delighted as they watch their designs take shape.

First, lay a large piece of wax paper on a flat work surface. Then, encourage your child to play with the glue, squeezing it over the paper in squiggles.

Then have your child sprinkle glitter on the inventive designs while it is still wet. He can leave several squiggles white to color later upon drying.

Let dry for several hours and then carefully peel off the wax paper. Ask your child to thread yarn or ribbon through the spaces in their 3D designs. They can also use the felt-tip pens to color. The designs can also be hung for an interesting display.

### *Fun With Yarn*

You will need: Yarn; Glue; Cardboard. First, ask your child to draw a simple design on the cardboard. Then prompt them to squeeze glue along the outline of the drawing. Cut strands of yarn and place carefully upon the glue.

Encourage placement of the yarn as close together as possible to fill in and cover the space within the boundaries of the design. Continue to add glue alternating with the yarn until covered. Allow to dry thoroughly.

They can create abstract designs or made simple drawings.

### *Intriguing Resistance*

You will need: Baby oil; Watercolor paint; Paintbrushes; Plain white paper (or watercolor paper if available); Cotton-tip swabs.

Build your child's observation skills by composing a transparent design with the baby oil using a cotton-tip swab.

Then have your child paint over the design with watercolors. The oil resists the paint so the background of the paper soaks up the color leaving the oil design to stand out.

Your child will be fascinated by the metamorphosis of their motifs.

These activities will stimulate your child's imagination and who knows what wonderful things will happen!

***Dawn Marie Barbyte***

# Library Resources

## Winter Fun

📖 ***All You Need for a Snowman*** by Alice Schertle; illustrated by Barbara Lavallee; Silver Whistle (Harcourt, Inc.); San Diego, CA; 2002; Hardcover; $16.00. All you need is one small snowflake, except... and the list gradually grows, and the children create two wonderful whimsical snowmen.

📖 ***A Little Bit of Winter*** by Paul Steward; pictures by Chris Riddell; HarperCollins; New York, NY; 1999; Hardcover; $12.95. Winter is coming and Hedgehog is going to be hibernating. Friend Rabbit will miss Hedgehog, but what Hedgehog will miss is the snow of winter. A charming tale of friendship.

📖 ***Snowmen at Night*** by Caralyn Buehner; pictures by Mark Buehner; Phyllis Fogelman Books (Penguin Putnam); New York, NY; 2002; Hardcover; $15.99. If you've ever wondered what snowmen do at night (to get the semi-crooked look in the morning), they slide down hills, get into snowball fights, and have a wonderful time until they limp their way back home. Shapes and pictures hidden in the rollicking illustrations add fun.

📖 ***When the Moon is Full: A lunar year*** by Penny Pollock; illustrated by Mary Azarian; Little, Brown and Company; Boston, MA; 2001; Hardcover; $15.95. Each month brings a new full moon, each with its own Native American name, poem-story, and a bit of information about its meaning.

📖 ***Winter: An alphabet acrostic*** by Steven Schnur; illustrated by Leslie Evans; Clarion Books; New York, NY; 2002; Hardcover; $15.00. Take a winter word and write each letter on its own line. Now, write a description of some part of winter. These are pictures drawn in words, winter poems which come alive in the illustrations. EARS become Even under caps, they Ache and turn Red in the Stinging cold.

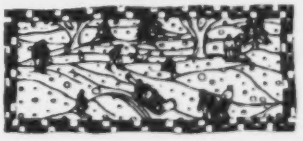
## Books of Whimsy

📖 ***Jethro Byrd Fairy Child*** by Bob Graham; Candlewick Press; Cambridge, MA; 2002; Hardcover; $15.99. Annabelle believed in fairies. She was the only one in her family who seriously entertained this idea. But she was right, and when she met Jethro Byrd Fairy Child, and rescued their stuck ice cream truck (yes, fairies do enjoy ice cream). Her father is too busy working to see anything, and her mother doesn't really believe the fairy family exists, but she makes a lovely tea party for everyone, just the same. A charming book about believing.

📖 ***The Magic Hat*** by Mem Fox; illustrated by Tricia Tusa; Harcourt, Inc. San Diego, CA; 2002; Hardcover; $16.00. A lyrical and whimsical story about a magic hat that skips around town turning people into bears and kangaroos and all sorts of creatures. Until a wizard comes along and changes everyone back; puts on the hat; and skips on down the road - a happy little boy.

📖 ***My Truck is Stuck*** by Kevin Lewis and Daniel Kirk; Hyperion Books for Children; New York, NY; 2002; Hardcover; $14.99. Two dogs are hauling a truckload of bones, until they get stuck in a big pothole. Everyone who rides down the road tries to help them. Eventually there's a whole caravan of cars and trucks (count them as their engines roar). Finally a tow truck pulls them out and off they go down the road. But there isn't a bone left on the truck. The little dogs in the neighborhood ran off with them.

📖 ***A Story for Bear*** by Dennis Haseley and Jim LaMarche; Harcourt, Inc. San Diego, CA; 2002; Hardcover; $16.00. A young curious bear finds a scrap of paper and puzzles over its meaning. Eventually the bear befriends a woman who reads to him. He falls in love with reading and the sounds of the words. At the end of the summer when she leaves the woods, she leaves him her books. A warm and wonderful story perfect for children who love books and being read to.

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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

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NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

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# Todos los Niños Tienen Dotes

## *Fomentando las Aptitudes de su Niño*

Todos los niños en la escuela preescolar están jugando excepto Alex. Él está sentado a un lado mirando a los otros niños subir escaleras y otras estructuras y tirarse por el resbaladero.

A pesar de tener amigos, Alex es francamente descoordinado. Es una bala de las computadoras pero tienen problemas en usar la fuerza física y habilidad para poder hacer cosas con sus compañeros.

Tania está sentada en el piano improvisando una melodía que escuchó una sola vez antes. La música empieza a fluir hacia dentro y alrededor de ella a medida que experimenta con las notas y los acordes. Sus padres están encantados, pero piensan "si sólo ella pudiese aprender el alfabeto con la misma facilidad".

Todos los niños nacen con aptitudes. Pero muchos nunca lograran su potencial porque sus aptitudes nunca fueron alentadas. El líder potencial, el artista, el buen gerente, solo puede desarrollarse cuando tienen las experiencias que sustentan esos dotes.

Mientras uno está criando un niño es muy fácil ver lo que falla. Un niño que parece no poder seguir las instrucciones más sencillas, que tiene problemas aprendiendo a contar, y no puede aprender a andar en bicicleta. Uno quiere arreglar los problemas, hacer al niño tan capaz como los otros, pero en ese proceso las habilidades del niño pueden ser ignoradas.

Hay una razón importante para enfocar en las aptitudes del niño en vez de sus debilidades.

De esta manera se ayuda a los niños a aislarse contra el estrés, suavizando las cosas en momentos difíciles. De esta manera llegan a valorizarse a si mismos y sus aptitudes y saben que pueden compensar sus limitaciones. A pesar de lo que lo que pase, pueden creer en si mismos y manejar sus dificultades.

Un interés o pasatiempo también puede desarrollarse en una área especializada de deleite que durara toda la vida, e incluso convertirse en una carrera. Algunas aptitudes claramente parecen conducir a cargos. Buena coordinación, una aptitud para las cifras, o una manera científica de pensar parecen claramente conducir a carreras en deportes, danza, matemáticas o las ciencias.

Otros talentos pueden enriquecer la vida de un niño. Un niño que está interesado en coleccionar piedras quizás no se convierta en geólogo pero ese interés puede convertirse en una pasión de toda la vida que le dará placer. Si las habilidades de su niña están en campo de las relaciones interpersonales ella podrá encontrar y mantener amigos para toda una vida.

### Tres Etapas Para Desarrollar el Potencial de su Niño

Hay tres etapas para desarrollar el potencial de su niño. La primera es una de nuestras tareas más importantes como padres: identificar las posibles áreas de excelencia que posee su hijo.

Una vez que ha descubierto las aptitudes de su niño, el segundo paso es decirles para que el niño adquiera conciencia sobre ellas. Esta etapa ayuda a su niña a desarrollar nuevas imágenes positivas sobre si misma basadas en sus habilidades.

El paso final expande el potencial de su hija ayudándola a desarrollar sus aptitudes a lo máximo.

#### *Paso Uno: Identifique las Aptitudes y Cualidades de su Niño*

Uno empieza ayudando a su niño a reconocer que es importante y valioso cuando identificas sus aptitudes y



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cualidades especiales. Su hijo puede tener un talento para la música, aptitud atlética en la cancha de fútbol, o capacidad artística. Su aptitud puede ser un cualidad mental.
Puede que tenga una memoria excepcional para los detalles. O, quizás, es una habilidad social y tiene un corazón bondadoso y generoso. Quizás tiene muchos conocimientos en una materia especifica como los dinosaurios, piedras, o las constelaciones de estrellas.

Una de las cosas mas importantes que puedes hacer para descubrir las aptitudes de tu hijo es dejar a un lado tus prejuicios. Es importante recordar que las aptitudes especiales de tu niño pueden no ser tus propias capacidades, o incluso algo que tu valoras personalmente. Trate de estar abierto a todas las posibilidades imaginables.

Hay varias maneras en que puedes descubrir las aptitudes especiales de tu niño.

Piensa en términos de categorías. Piensa honestamente sobre tu hijo en todo ámbito: social, emocional, fisica, moral e intelectualmente. Haz una lista de tus descripciones. Ahora, busca los posibles talentos y aptitudes de tu hijo.

Pregúntale a otros. Habla con otros que conocen y le tienen afecto a tu hija, como las maestras, sacerdotes, amigos, padres, familia y amigos. Agregue las opiniones de ellos a su lista.

Observe silenciosamente. Durante los próximos días observa a tu hija en distintas situaciones: en la escuela, con amigas, jugando sola, y con la familia. Sintonice las cosas que le parecen gustar y que elige hacer.

Use su memoria. Mira los libros de recuerdos, fotos y videos viejos. Cuales fueron sus deseos de regalos para la navidad y su cumpleaños? El talento generalmente se expresa en nuestros intereses.

Escuche, verdaderamente escuche. Invita a tu hija a una conversación sin interrupciones.

Háblale sobre que le gusta hacer. Hay algún programa en el cual le gustaría inscribirse? Algunos pasatiempos o intereses?

Encuesta a tu familia. Piensen juntos como familia sobre los talentos especiales de cada miembro.

***Paso Dos: Señale esas aptitudes para que su niña las reconozca.***

Reconocer las habilidades de nuestros hijos no es suficiente. Debemos comunicarles nuestros hallazgos. Entre más uno puede expandir la conciencia de nuestros hijos sobre sus cualidades, hay más posibilidad que su confianza aumente a medida que enfocan en sus aptitudes positivas.

Examine la lista de las aptitudes de tu hija. Elija una o dos que quieres que tu hija reconozca sobre si misma. Tendrás que poder respaldar esas afirmaciones sobre esos dones con ejemplos, así que tienes que asegurarte que las aptitudes realmente existan y que no sean unas que esperas que aparezcan en el futuro.

Alaba la aptitud solo cuando sea merecida y señala ejemplos concretos.

"Eres tan atleta, subiste por los juegos de la plaza con tanta facilidad y gracia".
"No sabía eso sobre los dinosaurios. Sabes tanto sobre ellos".
"Fuiste tan amable con ese niño que estaba preocupado que su padre estaba atrasado para recogerlo. Lo hiciste sentirse mejor".
"Eres muy artístico. Tus dibujos siempre tienen tanto detalle".

El niño quizás no pueda ver estas aptitudes por su propia cuenta. Sea específico en su elogios para que él sepa exactamente lo que hizo para recibir el reconocimiento. Algunos niños (y adultos) pueden tener dificultades en aceptar los elogios. Menosprecian sus logros. Quizás tengas que practicar esto con tu niño. Quizás incluso tengas que aprender a aceptar elogios para ti misma. La mejor respuesta cuando te hacen un elogio es decir afectuosamente "gracias" o "agradezco que me lo digas". Menospreciar elogios sin dar razones de por qué no es merecido es bastante común entre adultos pero pocas veces es apropiado.

***Paso Tres: Déle a los niños las oportunidades para demostrar y desarrollar sus capacidades.***

Los deportes de equipo le ofrecen una oportunidad a los niños dotados fisicamente. Los niños con habilidades sociales les va bien en grupos. Los artistas incipientes les gusta dibujar y hacer cosas con distintos materiales. Aliente a su niña a dibujar menús para las cenas de vacaciones. Ponga sus obras de artes enmarcadas en su oficina. No obligue a un niño renuente. De esa manera se convierte en trabajo y no en placer.

Alienta a tu hija en sus intereses. Quizás tu no creas que los insectos sean fascinantes pero si tu joven naturalista si los encuentra, libros ilustrados y una lupa serán muy apreciados y útiles.

## Las Aptitudes Pueden Compensar Áreas de Débiles

Reconocer los dones de un niño no significa que uno tiene que ignorar las áreas débiles. Los niños que tienen dificultad en aprender leer, tienen mala coordinación fisica, o carecen de habilidades sociales pueden realmente necesitar ayuda. Pero al alentar las aptitudes reales del niño esto le permite sentirse bien sobre si mismo y agrega algo de equilibrio a un niño que de otra forma solo percibe limitaciones. Ella es algo más que alguien que no sabe andar en bicicleta, ella es una incipiente pianista. El niño que tiene problemas distinguiendo las letras del alfabeto es mucho más que un joven que tiene problemas de lectura, también es un talentoso comediante que hace a otros

percibir el humor que los rodea.

Además, es posible usar las habilidades como una forma de desarrollarse en áreas de debilidad. Por ejemplo, los niños que tienen problemas con aprender las letras del alfabeto por nombre pueden beneficiarse dibujándolas, o haciéndolas con sus dedos y cuerpo.

### Se Requiere Esfuerzo Para ser Bueno en Algo

Aliente la excelencia. Incluso las habilidades naturales requieren perfeccionamiento. Ayude a su niño a valorizar el tiempo y esfuerzo que se requiere para hacer esas habilidades florecer. Nada llega sin práctica. No tiene porque percibirse como trabajo, pero aun así requiere tiempo y práctica de todas formas.

Hágale saber a su niño que el trabajo serio tiene su recompensa. Dibujar puede ser entretenido, pero hacer que el libro de dibujo se vea exactamente como uno quiere requiere esfuerzo, Tocar el piano, meter un gol, aprender un programa de computación, leer, y cosas por el estilo requieren "hacer". Frecuentemente el proceso es un placer, pero aun así es un proceso de perfeccionamiento, de mejorar y mejorar.

Esto no es una competencia. No compares a tu niño a otros hermanos, amigos o vecinos. Cada uno de nuestros niños tiene habilidades y cada uno de nuestros niños merece reconocimiento de sus destrezas y su trabajo al desarrollar esos dones.

*Michele Borba, Ed.D. es la autora de Parents do Make a Difference (Jossey Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA, http://josseybass.com, y Building Moral Intelligence: The seven essential virtues that teach kids to do the right thing, Jossey Bass, 2001. Su nuevo libro es No More Misbehavin': 38 Bad behaviors and how to stop them (Jossey Bass, March, 2003). Puedes informarte mas sobre el libro en http://www.moralintelligence.com / Borba también es madre de tres hijos adolescentes y ex maestra.*

## Cultivando Inteligencias y Aptitudes

### Ruido Alegre – Movimiento y Sonido

***Zapatos Caseros para Zapateo Americano***

Es fácil darle a los niños pies alegres. Déles un par de zapatos viejos, algunas monedas, y un tubo de pegamento. Eso es todo. Déjelos que ellos descifren como distribuir las monedas en las suelas. Espere que el pegamento realmente se seque y después déjelos sueltos. El garaje, el subterráneo, la vereda, la plaza, e incluso en el piso de linóleo que no puede echarse a perder más – todos estos lugares son perfectos para el incipiente bailarín. Con el radio, el aparato de CD, grabadora, o sus propias voces de acompañamiento, Broadway estará listo para recibirlos.

***El Baile de la Bufanda***

Hay un enfoque más silencioso al movimiento que se aprovecha de la inteligencia espacial. El baile de la bufanda le permite a los niños ver las líneas y formas que sus cuerpos producen en el espacio, parecido a mover estrellitas a través de la oscuridad durante el 4 de julio. Esto es importante porque los bailarines están esencialmente creando estructuras en el espacio – como arquitectura. Pero cada línea desaparece a medida que se dibuja. Al usar bufandas, los niños pueden ver los arcos, las vueltas, y los cambios abruptos de dirección y esto pone toda la estructura de la danza en sus cabezas. Al mirar la bufanda, pueden juzgar y cambiar sus movimientos. Las bufandas pueden ser amarradas en la punta de palos para extender la línea aun más.

***Torres***

Los niños muy pequeños instintivamente apilan bloques para ver cuan alto pueden llegar antes de que se caigan espectacularmente. Lo que parece ser el juego de niños es el producto de inteligencia lógica, espacial y cinestética. Los niños que construyen torres están pensando cada paso del proceso, manejando masa, esfuerzo, simetría, equilibrio y la siempre presente gravedad. Es física, ingeniería y arquitectura sintetizada en una bella torre.

No hay gastar dinero para tener un juego de bloques que puede crecer y crecer. Ya está en las repisas de su cocina. Reciclar la mayoría de los productos de cartón en sus repisas creará un fabuloso juego para armar.

He aquí unas pocas posibilidades: cajas de sal, latas de polvo para hornear, cajas de condimentos, cajas de avena, cajas de zapatos, cajas de cereal cerradas para que sean más estables, cajas de Band-Aid, cajas de licor, cajas de galletas, tarros de café. Quizás tengas que ponerle algún peso a las cajas más livianas si se desmoronan. Cuando los niños se aburran de construir, bote las cajas en una envase grande o en una bolsa de basura plástica para el almacenamiento.

Igual que estos bloques de armar hechos de cajas, los niños pueden hacer torres de envases plásticos. Envases de quesos y yogurt, botellas de agua, contenedores de comida, y tazones de plástico que pueden apilarse.

Las torres pueden ser sujetadas con cinta adhesiva, o simplemente apiladas, destruidas y apiladas una vez más.

***Juegos de Patrones***

Poder detectar un patrón es una función primordial de la inteligencia lógica. Los niños que son sensibles a los patrones tienen una ventaja cuando tienen que analizar, secuenciar, seguir reglas, computar, resolver problemas, ver relaciones, o razonar abstractamente.

Si eso le parece matemáticas, tiene razón. Los patrones son el lenguaje de las matemáticas, pero tienen una atracción irresistible para los

niños con una fuerte inteligencia visual y cinestética. Uno puede ver las manos ansiosas de los niños al ver una caja llena de bloques de madera, cerámicas de color, tapas de botellas, y otros materiales diversos. Los adultos se sorprenden cuanto rato los niños le dedican a crear patrones bellos y complejos cuando tienen una amplia cantidad de deshechos interesantes.

Consiga un canasto y llénelo de: botones, bolitas, muestras de azulejos cerámicos, clavijas, tejas de madera, fichas, tapas de botella, naipes, carretes de hilo, tornillos y tuercas, piedrecillas, muestras de pinturas(gratis en la tienda de pintura), distintos tipos de frijoles, etc.

### *Lea Todas las Noticias Papel de Diario Para los que no Saben Leer*

Los niños chicos se entusiasman mucho cuando empiezan a reconocer las letras. A veces los padres bien intencionados empiezan a comprar silabarios y tarjetas para alentar las habilidades de leer.

Desafortunadamente, algunas de estas "ayudas pedagógicas" son igual de entretenidas que observar un choque de tortugas, Los niños o pierden interés o se rebelan, y esa no es una buena manera de comenzar un plan de lectura para toda la vida. Por otro lado, por (casi) muy poco dinero su niño puede regocijarse con cientos de letras en su entorno natural – las palabras y los párrafos de la primera plana.

Un periódico tiene todas las letras en docenas de tamaños, estilos y colores. Déle un marcador a su niño y déjele marcar todas las A hasta Z que vea.

Recortar letras grandes de las páginas de liquidaciones y titulares es otra manera maravillosa de comenzar. Los niños pueden recortar pilas de letras y usarlos como piezas de Scrabble para deletrear sus primeras palabras.

## Aprendiendo a Través del Arte

### *Esculturas Comestibles*

Corteza de pastel y masa para galletas preparada tienen una textura maravillosa –suficientemente blanda para capturar una huella digital perfecta y lo suficientemente resistente para poder hacer gusanos y pelotas. Los niños las pueden moldear en carros, canguros, o zanahorias. Puede aun ser más entretenido experimentar con colorante para alimentos. Cuando se acaba la diversión, empolve la creación con canela y azúcar, agregue un poco de mantequilla, métalo al horno a 350 grados Fahrenheit.

*Estas actividades fueron tomadas (con el permiso de la autora) de un libro realmente innovador, Seven Times Smarter: : 50 activities, games and projects to develop the seven intelligences of your child por Laurel Schmidt, Three Rivers Press (Crown Publishing), New York, $15.00 tapa blanda.*

**Nos encantó este libro.** Está lleno de ideas que los niños pueden hacer con poco dinero y con solo un poco de preparación de parte de los padres. Incluye antecedentes sobre los siete tipos de inteligencia de Gardner, y también es un marco de referencia para comprender las aptitudes de los niños y sus intereses y como crear un alegre entorno para jugar.

***Laurel Schmidt ha estado trabajando en educación por más de 30 años, como profesora y directora. Actualmente, es Directora de Servicios Estudiantiles del Distrito Escolar Unificado de Santa Monica-Malibu. Puedes visitar su sitio Web en*** WWW.SEVENTIMESSMARTER.COM

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# Parents as Role Models

## *Helping Your Child Move Gently Through the World*

I have a very vivid memory of my father. He's kneeling down watching some insects and telling me to be kind to every living creature. So, when I was around 8 years old and some boys were planning to torture a frog, I knew exactly who to go to. My father. To this day, in my house, we trap and remove spiders, and I've tossed many a worm from the sidewalk into the moist grass.

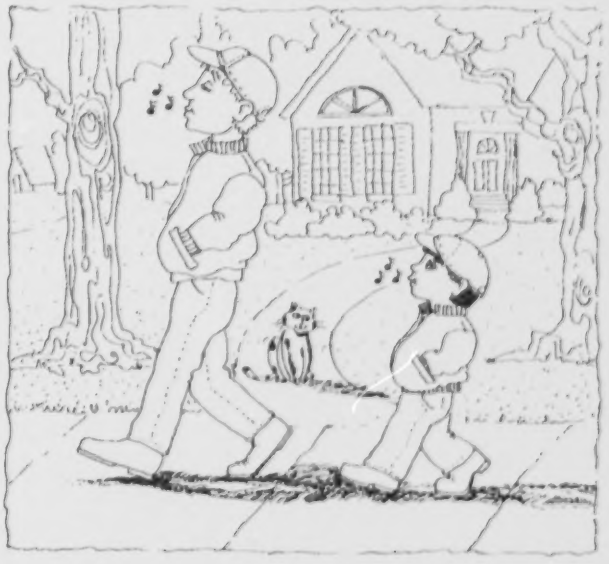
How do we come to define acceptable behavior? How do children learn what to do when someone bumps into them, or takes the last swing on the playground? Where do children learn honesty, or kindness? The answer is: from the behavior of their parents.

### Why do our kids need us to be role models?

**• Parents are uniquely suited to be their children's role models.**

We are the most consistent influence in our children's lives. Other adults come and go. The neighbors, teachers, friends, even family members aren't there as consistently as parents.

We see our kids every day and when we're not with them physically, they know we're within contact range.



What's more, research has found that the most compelling role models are those who are both powerful, and warm and loving. Parents certainly hold the power in the family (although sometimes it seems like we're always struggling to maintain it). We dispense the rewards and consequences. We have the power to make things right in our children's world.

We're also warm and loving, at least most of the time. When our kids skin their knees, we make it better. When they can't sleep at night, we comfort them. When they're hungry, we feed them. That combination of power and warmth makes us potent role models.

**• We have an impact in all areas of our children's lives.**

Because we're always part of our children's lives, we can model appropriate behavior for almost all circumstances.

The way we react to our job tells our children how they should react to school, and to their work later on. Complaining about our jobs, about the work, about bosses and supervisors trickles down to our children. Doing our job with zest and enthusiasm also rubs off. So, don't be surprised if your youngster starts reacting to school or day care in the same way you react to going to work.

What about relationships with family and friends? Being a good son or daughter to your parents sets up the expectation that your children will behave similarly.

The way you treat friends and other adults tells your children how

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they should behave with their friends.

Moral and character traits come straight from parents: honesty, caring, kindness, and respect for others. We are our children's first and best teacher.

**• If we don't teach our kids, other far less desirable models, will step into the breach.**

Other models are all around. Sports and rock stars, television characters, and more are only some of the models readily available to our children. Few of them provide desirable patterns of behavior for our children to follow. If we don't set standards with our behavior, their behavior will become the model.

**• We can help our kids evaluate the actions of others, inoculating them against less desirable influences.**

When our kids do see behaviors and actions contrary to what we believe, we can be there to tell them "no, that's not really the way to behave."

Remember the combination of power and nurturing that make us potent role models? Well, when we explain why it's not a good idea to beat someone up like the character in the television cartoon, our words combined with our actions counteract the behavior of the television character. If our children should mimic the behavior they see on the air, or in video games, or movies, we can explain that in our house, or in the real world, that behavior is not acceptable. They will believe us, because they have our behavior as an example.

**• It's our job. It's the job we signed up for when we said..."hey, let's become parents."**

You may think your job is to be an accountant, lawyer, electrician, or clerk, but it isn't. From the moment we become parents our job title has changed. We're now a Parent and our primary responsibility is to the little one we brought into the world.

I vividly remember fussing over my son when he was young and my exasperated youngster saying "don't worry." Now, honestly, how reassuring is that? I would reply, "It's my job to worry." It's our job to raise our children, and to do it thoughtfully and conscientiously.

## How to be a Role Model

It's a serious responsibility being a role model, and there are some things that we need to remember.

✦ *It's in our actions as well as our words.*

How do our children learn the conduct we value? Certainly our words have an impact. We explain the rules and why they are important to follow. Experiencing the consequences of their actions is also crucial. If they break the family rules, there are consequences. But children learn the expectations of their family (and society) through watching the behavior of those around them.

We want our children to have a clear set of values, and the behaviors that go along with them. So, the "do as I say, not as I do" philosophy just doesn't work. It only teaches our children that it's okay to say one thing and do another. They may even parrot our admirable words, as they imitate our less commendable behavior.

Instead, set a good example. When we treat each other with respect and consideration our children learn that this is way they too should behave. If we lose our temper, strike out and say hurtful things we shouldn't be surprised when our children do the same.

✦ *Think about the behavior you don't think about.*

Our kids watch us all the time, absorbing everything they see and hear (except apparently our admonition to clean up their rooms). But we're not used to thinking that we have an audience. Go back over your day and think about what happened. Were you polite to your family? Did "please" and "thank you" accompanying requests? What happened when someone came home in a bad mood. Adult temper tantrums are even less attractive than the child version, but very salient and obvious to our youngsters. How did you act when things went wrong? Even adults and children with flash tempers can learn not to strike out verbally or physically.

Think about the moral lessons you're providing. Are you honest in your dealings with others? Returning the extra money given to you in error by the store clerk sends a very different message from chortling over the additional change as you walk out the store.

✦ *Behave "aloud"*

Kids will only learn what they actually

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perceive. It's important to make your actions evident to your children. Your child will see how you work through problems and dilemmas.

You may feel a bit silly saying "I'm going to send money to (name of worthy organization)" but it helps your child to see that you are helping others in need. "My mom isn't feeling too well, I'm going over to see if she needs anything," helps your child see what you're doing, and why.

✦ *Reinforce the lesson by using a specific phrase to sum it up.*

As I would trap spiders in cups, walk over to the side door and release them my son would often look at me quizzically as if to ask "What good would that do?" and "why bother?" "All living creatures want to live" I would explain.

Waiting until everyone is present before the family dives into food, you can explain "we eat as a family," or "it's about respecting your mom enough to wait until she can join us."

Whatever the family value, reinforce it with words. "We have so much we can share it." Or, "we don't take things that don't belong to us." Or, "when someone gives us something, we say 'thank you'."

Any parent who has spent a bit of time watching the lives of their children unfold will recognize that we don't raise our kids all alone. Children have preschool teachers, teacher aides, family members, family friends. There are coaches, instructors of ballet, gymnastics, piano. The parents of playmates, the neighbor next door who throws a few balls around, or is teaching our child how to bake cookies all become teachers. Make sure they are teaching good lessons.

Then, there are the role models on television, such as sports figures, music stars, and actors in movies and television. Don't be reluctant to comment on their actions. When you see unacceptable behavior, say so. Don't let your children decide that there are different rules for the famous.

There's one final, and somewhat selfish, reason for being a good role model. However we have behaved, whatever actions we have modeled for our children, we have the right to have those actions extended to us. We can require the same treatment. When we model respect, treating those around us, including our children, with thoughtfulness, we have the moral right to be treated the same way. Conversely, if we treat our children with indifference, or outright anger and hostility, we shouldn't be surprised if that too comes back to us.

It's an uncertain world out there for children. They aren't born knowing the rules. They depend on the adults around them to teach them. Let's teach them with awareness.

See also: "Parenting Lessons;" V.16 N.6; June-2001.

***Neala S. Schwartzberg, Ph.D. is Editor of "Parent & preschooler Newsletter" and a writer on health and human development.***

## Manners Matter

Manners are old fashioned - in this action-filled, fast-paced world manners are a thing of the past. That's what people say but, if we stop and think about it, we may find out that manners really are still very relevant.

What do manners do for our children, and for us too? Well, they help us to act with dignity and self-assurance in any situation. How is that possible? Well, when you know the rules you are never afraid or uneasy. If you absolutely understand what is expected of you then you are never caught unawares.

Parents can help their children by teaching them the basics of what might be expected of them in a given situation.

First, talk to your child before a special occasion. For example, before he attends a friend's birthday party you might have a talk about what will happen there, what he should do upon arrival, how he goes about thanking his friend's parents for inviting him, and what games and food might be offered. Once he is there he will feel relaxed because there will be no unpleasant or uncomfortable surprises.

After the event, take a few moments to talk about what happened at the party. Ask him about how he felt, what was different from what you had anticipated. What situation arose that made him feel as though he didn't know how to respond. Let him process the event with you so that you can offer him feedback and further guidance.

As time passes, talking about upcoming social situations will become routine. You will have the chance to provide suggestions and counsel on a developmentally appropriate level. For example, when your child is very young, simple instructions and recommendations will suffice. "Always remember to tell your friend's Mommy 'thank you;" or "Always share toys or games with the other children at the party." As he gets a little older, more sophisticated talks will be needed as you discuss more subtle issues such as how to respond to naughty behavior on the part of other children or how to decline something that is offered without hurting someone's feelings.

"Yes" manners do indeed matter. They help your child feel confident and poised in his world. Who knows what the far-reaching value of this will be? It's up to parents to help children find their way.

*Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour*

# The Case Against Gold Stars: *When we reward our children for behaving well, we teach them to ask, "What's in it for me?"*

Call it the "gold-star syndrome." Sometimes we paste stars on a chart. At other times we offer toys or extra TV, candy or cash, pizza or special privileges. We reward kids for doing what we want instead of punishing them for disobeying.

Pull out a child-care book at random – or just watch a typical parent at home – and you'll notice that the emphasis is on "positive reinforcement." It is so pervasive that few of us pause to question its effects.

The bad news, according to a growing body of research, is that bribery – which is what rewards amount to – is not much of an improvement over punishing children. In fact, I strongly believe that rewards and punishments really aren't opposites at all. They are two sides of the same coin, and the coin doesn't buy very much.

"Rewards work!" many parents insist. But work to do what? And at what cost? The answer to the first question is that rewards, like punishments, are extremely effective at getting us one thing and one thing only: temporary obedience. What they can never do, however, is help children become responsible, ethical, decent people.

Studies conclude that rewards are ineffective. In the process of writing a book on the subject, I've found hundreds of studies showing that rewards are strikingly ineffective at producing lasting change in attitudes or behaviors. Once the rewards run out, people go right back to acting the way they did. And no wonder. Rewards don't create an enduring commitment to any value or action; they merely change what we do.

Consider the questions that children may ask themselves. Threaten a punishment and a child will come to ask, "What am I supposed to do, and what will happen to me if I don't do it?" Bribe him by dangling a reward and he'll wonder, "What am I supposed to do, and what will I get for doing it?" Notice how similar these two questions are, and how different from what we want children to ask: "What kind of person do I want to be?" Good values have to be grown from the inside out; bribes and threats at best change children's behavior only for a while.

But isn't temporary compliance sometimes good enough? Clearly it is tempting to use any means at our disposal to stop a four-year old from making a fuss at the store, to get an eight year-old out the door on time, or to get a ten-year-old to settle down and finish her homework. In the short term, a sufficiently appealing carrot will usually work. But the long-term costs are considerable.

Rewards simply control through seduction rather than force, according to University of Rochester psychologists Edward Deci, Ph.D., and Richard Ryan, Ph.D., and all techniques that rely on control ultimately undermine what children need in order to make good decisions and take responsibility for their actions. At least two studies have shown, for example, that kids whose parents reward them frequently are less generous than their peers.

Surprising? It shouldn't be. A child promised a treat or praised extravagantly for helping people has learned that the only reason to act that way is that he'll get something for it. No reward, no reason to care.

Other research shows that the more students are led to focus on getting good grades, the less interested they will be in what they are studying, the less creative their thinking will be, and the more they will try to take the easy way out. Again, it makes sense: The more children see the "A" as the goal, the more they will come to see the learning itself as something to be gotten over with. The practice of paying kids for to grades – offering, in effect, a reward for a reward – doubles the damage.

At the University of Illinois, researchers introduced some preschoolers to a beverage called kefir. Some were just asked to drink it; others were praised lavishly or promised treats for drinking. Did the rewarded kids slurp down more kefir? You bet. But a week later they wanted nothing to do with the stuff, whereas the children offered no reward liked it just as much as, if not more than, before.

Substitute reading, doing math, or acting responsibly for drinking kefir, and you begin to glimpse the destructive power of rewards. In fact, a good general rule is that the more we want our children to want to do something, the more counterproductive it will be to reward them for doing it.

It's not the reward itself that's objectionable – it's the practice of using something as a reward that causes the problem: "Do this and you'll get that." This feels controlling, causes dependence, and may spoil our relationship with our children. We risk coming to be seen as goody dispensers who have to be pleased rather than as loving and caring allies.

What's the alternative? Even praise, if the emphasis is on doing what we want and what makes us happy, can be counterproductive. There is, however, nothing wrong with positive comments that acknowledge and encourage what children have done – and leave them feeling proud of

» Continued on page 5.



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• • Continued from page 4.
themselves. Such comments are nice but if our long-term goal is more ambitious than getting kids to obey mindlessly, then we'll have to take the extra step of bringing them in on the process of making decisions.

You might say to your seven year-old, "I've noticed that lately it's taking you a long time to get dressed in the morning, honey. What do you think we can do to solve that?" And we have to reconsider some of our requests instead of just forcing compliance. For example, rather than fall back on bribes to get a four-year-old to sit through a long dinner, we might reflect on whether that expectation is age-appropriate.

Giving up anything that we're used to is a challenge. But the evidence is clear: Rewards may be effective at training a pet, but raising good kids means working with them rather than doing things to them.

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## Thinking about the behavior you don't think about

***Here's a type of dilemma many parents face.***

▪ ***What's the Story?***

Marco takes care of his two-year-old son Sabby on the weekends. Now that Sabby is walking and talking, Marco has to watch him more closely so that he doesn't get into trouble. A few weekends ago, Sabby stuck a metal bookmark into an electrical outlet that Marco leaves uncovered so that he can plug in the coffee maker in the morning. Sabby blew out all the fuses in the house, but luckily was not hurt. Despite Marco's scolding, Sabby still goes near the outlet when he gets the chance.

▪ ***Marco Says:***

I don't know why he keeps doing it. I've told him "no;" I've said "bad"; I've told him he could get really hurt. But he still goes over to that outlet. What's the Point?

Sabby may still show interest in the outlet because Marco's words don't match his actions. Marco tells Sabby "no" but Sabby sees Marco put the coffee maker plug into the outlet every morning. Sabby doesn't know the difference between the plug that's supposed to go in the outlet and other metal objects that shouldn't.

▪ ***The Solution?***

While Sabby is at this age Marco needs to cover the outlet with a safety cover anytime the coffee maker is not plugged in. Then Sabby won't have the chance to get into it. When Sabby is a little older (three or so), Marco can explain the details of safe materials, dangerous materials, and electrical outlets.

He could also tell Sabby that only grownups are allowed to touch electric outlets. It seems as though Marco is tring to get this across by saying, "no" or "bad," but he assumes that Sabby knows what he means. Kids, especially young children, will copy what they see even if they don't fully understand it. Sabby's action is a dangerous behavior that could cause him serious harm. Marco needs to take immediate action to ensure Sabby's safety.

• Adapted with permission from a wonderful free parents guide *Adventures in Parenting* from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Call the NICHD Clearinghouse at 1-800-370-2943 or download from the website at **http://WWW.NICHD.NIH.GOV**

# Dear Reader ...

Politicians, entertainment and sports figures, those in the news rarely depict behaviors, traits and qualities we'd like our children to emulate. Yet, if youngsters don't see positive characteristics in action, how will they know that's what they should aspire to be.

Ah, that's where we come in. We are the models for how we want our children to conduct themselves. We provide an internal compass for kids living in a world in which the external indicators of worth and value are often sadly skewed. In which money and power are the yardstick by which we judge people, and not their kindness, integrity, or honor.

Years ago, when my son was very young, and after a particularly challenging day, I lost my temper and started shouting at him. My son was appalled. He summoned all his indignation and said "That's no way to talk to a child." Oh my. He was right. I was wrong. I had taught him how to behave, and then, I didn't. I apologized, and learned my lesson. I was a role model for my child, and I had better do it properly.

This month our feature is on parents as role models. Our children are always watching us. What lessons are we living?

Gail Schwartzberg



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## Preschooler in the Kitchen

# Rice Pudding for My Love

February is here. Although winter will be leaving us soon, the preschoolers are probably getting restless looking for something different to do. How about making some comforting and lip-smacking rice or chocolate puddings?

Rice pudding is very popular in Brazil. We call it *Arroz de Festa*, *Rice's Feast*, or *Party Rice*. There is a saying in Brazil when a person is happy, congenial, and helpful, he/she is a rice pudding.

This pudding is called ***Rice Pudding For My Love*** because 100 years ago every young lady of marriage age had to know how to prepare rice pudding. When she became engaged, she would have to prepare this pudding for her future in-laws. There are as many recipes of this pudding as there are cooks in Brazil.

### *Rice Pudding*

♥ **Ingredients**

3/4 cup long grain rice
4 cups water
1/8 teaspoon salt
2 cups milk, whole or skim
2 14-ounce cans of coconut milk
1 stick cinnamon
1 cup sugar
2 egg yolks beaten
1/4 cup heavy cream
candied rose or violet petals for garnish

♥ Child: Measure the rice and place in a colander. Measure the water and place in a large pan. Measure and add salt to water. Measure the milk, and place in a separate large pan.

♥ Adult: Help child rinse the rice. Bring the water to a boil. Add the rice and stir well. Lower the heat and let the rice simmer and cook until tender. Drain the rice of any leftover liquid, and set it aside.

♥ Child: Empty both coconut milk cans into the milk pan. Add the cinnamon. Measure the sugar, and mix it into the milks.

♥ Adult: Place the milk mixture on medium heat, stir and bring it to a boil. Reduce the heat and mix in the cooked rice. Let it simmer for about 45 minutes, or until most of the liquid has evaporated.

♥ Child: Beat the egg yolks with the heavy cream in a small bowl.

♥ Adult: Remove the pan from the heat. Mix a little of the rice with the egg yolk mixture, then place the mix back with the rice. This will keep the hot rice from setting the eggs. Keep stirring constantly over low heat. Cook for another 5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Pour the pudding in a glass bowl. Some people like this pudding hot, others like it chilled. Cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until chilled. Garnish with the candied petals, and serve.

This is another pudding that I made in brazil. It is delicious plain or served with ice cream or fresh fruit.

### *Chocolate Pudding*

• **Ingredients**

2 14-ounce cans of sweetened condensed milk
4 cups milk
1/2 pound semisweet chocolate, in small pieces
2 tablespoons coffee
5 eggs at room temperature
1 cup fine granulated sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons flour
Pinch of salt

• Coverture For the Pudding

1/2 pound semisweet chocolate, in small pieces
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 teaspoon melted butter

• Needed Equipment: 8-cup mold; 1 baking pan with high edges; waxed paper; and aluminum foil; plate to unmold pudding

• Adult: preheat the oven to 325 F. Place chocolate pieces in a pan.

• Child: Measure 1 cup of milk and place in the pan with the chocolate. Measure 2 tablespoons of coffee and mix with the chocolate mixture.

• Adult: Place the pan with chocolate mixture on a very low heat, or in a micro oven, and let the chocolate melt. Remove from the heat, and set aside. Place the other 1/2 pound of chocolate in another small pan. Add the butter, and the heavy cream. Set it asid

• Child: Coat an 8-cup mold with melted butter. Set it aside. Measure the coffee liquid and place in the pan with the chocolate. Break the eggs in a bowl.

• Adult: Beat with an electric beater for about 2 minutes. Set aside.

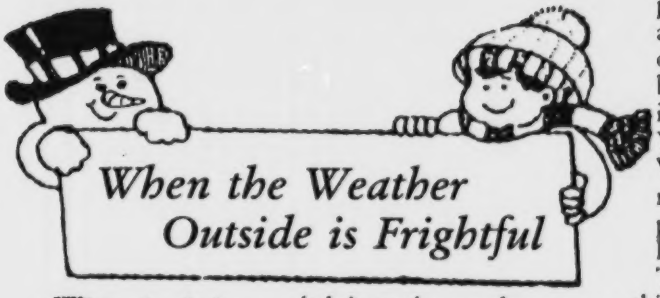
• Child: Measure the sugar, cornstarch, flour, and the salt into a small bowl, set aside. Empty the cans of condensed milk into a bowl of a food processor or a blender. Measure 3 cups of milk and mix with condensed milk.

• Adult: Process the condensed milk mixture. Add the melted chocolate, process for few seconds. Add the cornstarch mixture, process for 1 minute. Add the eggs and process until everything is smooth. Place the prepared mold in a baking pan. Pour the chocolate pudding in the mold. Fill the baking pan with hot water up to half of the outside mold. Cover the pudding with waxed paper then with the foil. Bake it for 45 minutes, or until set. To test: Insert a toothpick in the pudding, if it comes out dry, it is done. Remove from the oven and let mold cool on a wire rack. Meantime prepare the coverture.

• Adult: Melt remaining chocolate mixture over very low heat, or in the micro oven, and mix until smooth. Remove from the heat. Let it cool. Unmold the pudding on a platter or plate. Cover the pudding with the melted chocolate. Serve with a dollop of ice cream if desired, or diced fresh fruits, like strawberries, peaches, or blueberries, or mandarin oranges, etc. Serves about 8 to 10.

Enjoy these puddings, and taste the rich comforting flavor of the chocolate in your mouth. Every spoonful has the symphony of times gone by, and times that will come...beautiful Spring time.

***Sandra Allen***



# When the Weather Outside is Frightful

When the dark days of winter close in it is hard to find things that will make us and our children smile. We all know the feeling, especially those of us who live in the north where winter is often harsh, cold, and dark. The holidays are over, the novelty of the first snowfall is long past, and we find ourselves dreaming of hot, sunny beaches. Here are some tips that might just help as we await the arrival of the first spring robins.

❄ ***Find the good things in your life.*** Challenge your child to come up with ten things that give her pleasure. Write them down and each day let her choose one thing and then do it together. When she was a very little girl, my daughter loved me to sing her the song "Inch Worm". As one of her "happy things" she choose to have me sing that song. Each day as I offered her a choice of one happy thing, she choose that song over and over, day after day. It actually gave me such pleasure as she sat on my lap and I sang that song to her. It was a small, simple thing but it created such a bond. She is grown up now but still talks about those winter afternoons and the "Inch Worm" song.

❄ ***Help your child find ways to help others.*** It is a true fact of life that helping others makes you feel better yourself. Help your child find little ways in which he can do a good deed. Make a project out of it by spending a little time each day thinking about the deed and planning the way in which he will carry it out. When my nephew was five years old, he decided to plant carrots in his grandmother's garden. She had had a mild stroke during the winter and wouldn't be able to plant her garden that spring. During the winter months, he spent time with his mother looking through seed catalogues and saving his pennies to purchase the seeds. He and his mother discussed how to prepare the soil in the garden, how to plant the seeds, and when they would go over to his grandmother's house to water the plants. This project lasted for months and the expression on his face when he presented the precious carrots to his grandmother is a treasured memory for the entire family. It was preserved in a photograph - he and the bundle of carrots tied with a bright yellow ribbon, standing on the porch, a grin from ear to ear - he talks about that year with great emotion and wonderful memories.

❄ ***Plan a special event for you and your child.*** How about a grown-up lunch party? Some dreary afternoon, let your little one take a special bubble bath and dress in her fanciest dress. You do the same. When both of you are ready, serve a lovely pot of cocoa and special little finger sandwiches. Talk about "grown-up" things and giggle away the afternoon. It will raise both of your moods and might just become a special ritual for years to come. Remember that the hot chocolate contains phenylethylamine. This chemical is thought to soothe moodiness and chocolate may also raise serotonin levels too.

❄ ***Sunshine makes us feel better.*** When we are exposed to light, we seem happier. Remember that the dark days of winter can affect us in just the opposite way. So, spend as much time as possible outside or in rooms with bright fluorescent light. Plan activities for you and your child that include time spend in the light. Remember that morning light is the brightest. How about a picnic outdoors? Winter? So what? One friend of mine packed some hard boiled eggs, rolls, a thermos of hot soup, slices of pound cake, and another thermos of hot applesauce. Around 11 AM she took her children sleigh riding. At noon she unpacked the lunch, sat them down on their sleds, and they enjoyed their food, the day, and each other's company.

❄ ***Movement brightens up the most melancholy among us.*** Find ways to help your child move, wiggle, walk, dance, run, and laugh. How about taking a walk around the block and with each pass around you have to walk as something different? Perhaps the first trip around the block would be as giraffes, then the next trip might be as a clown. Ask your children to think of other ways to walk, maybe just skipping, or hopping. Whatever the movement, the whole family will soon be laughing and joining in. The neighbors might think you are all a little bit "touched" or they just might join in too. That's what happened when our family did it one winter afternoon. Soon many of the neighbors were outside hopping around and laughing too. We all became friends that day.

❄ ***How about a trip to the pet shop or local animal shelter?*** There is no better mood enhancer than watching fish swim or cuddling a soft, fuzzy bunny. Sandra Whiteside, a Long Island based child psychotherapist who uses pets as part of her work, reports that recent studies have shown that pets appear to improve moods, lower pulse rates and muscle tension, and calm nerves. If you already have a pet, you might use the trip to the pet store to accomplish an errand such as purchasing pet supplies.

So there we have it. Some little ideas that might just make those winter doldrums vanish. And, you will have the reputation of being a really fun mom too.

What's wrong with that?

*Jane E. Meckwood -Yazdpour*

# Library Resources

## Books of Inspiration

### For Adults

📖 ***Anyway: The paradoxical commandments*** by Kent M. Keith; G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York; 2001; Hardcover $19.95. "If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway." "People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway." You may have heard or read these "commandments" and never knew where they came from. Keith wrote them years ago out of his own experiences, but recently compiled them into a small book with their history, elaboration, and why we should follow them.

### For Children

📖 ***Apples Here*** by Will Hubbell; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, Illinois; 2002; Hardcover. "There are apples here," begins this book, and each time the phrase is used the reader is taken to the next stage in the cycle from buds to blossoms and finally to people's celebrations. A warm and charming book about nature and people's lives.

📖 ***Big Momma Makes the World*** by Phyllis Root; illustrated by Helen Oxenbury; Candlewick Press; Cambridge Massachusetts; 2002; Hardcover $16.99. The creation tale, told with a twist. This time the universe is made by Big Momma, a warm loving but no-nonsense kind of woman, toting a baby on her side. She's looking down and reminding us to take care of the world and all that live on and within.

📖 ***Fox and Fluff*** by Shutta Crum; illustrated by John Bendall-Brunello; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, Illinois; 2002; Hardcover $15.95. Love has the power to transform. In this charming tale a fox inadvertantly becomes the father of a chick. He tries to rid himself of his new progeny but even giving the little one to the hens didn't work. When Fluff and Fox are happily reunited they go on to start Papa Fox's Forest School serving vegetarian meals.

📖 ***Greetings Sun*** by Phillis and David Gershator; paintings by Synthia Saint James; DK Publishing, Inc.; New York, 1998; Hardcover $15.95. Two young children greet the day and all that it has to offer. In this lyrical book they begin "The stars are hiding, all but one. Good morning, good morning, good morning, sun." Then, they greet the breeze, their toes and knees and on through their day ending with "Greetings, moon. And now we're done...until it's time to greet the sun."

📖 ***How About a Hug?*** by Nancy Carlson; Viking/Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers; New York; 2001; Hardcover $15.99. Hugs are the best. There's very little that can't be helped by receiving a warm embrace. They're good on cold Monday mornings, when you're heading off to school or work, for scrapes and bumps, and sitting together in big chairs. Hugs are good anytime, especially to say I Love You.

📖 ***My Books of Thanks*** by B. G. Hennessy; illustrated by Hiroe Nakata; Candlewick Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts; 2002; Hardcover $12.00. We all need a bit of perspective now and again to help us remember what's really important. When that happens in your family sit down with your youngster and see the blessings in your lives, from simple existence, for being loved by friends and family, for beautiful things in the world, and much more.

📖 ***On Morning Wings*** by Reeve Lindbergh; illustrated by Holly Meade; A loving adaptation of Psalm 139 in which children reflect that the spirit of the universe is with them..

## *Moving?*

We don't want you to miss even one issue, so if you are planning a move, please be sure to send us your new address as soon as possible. Send your old and new address to:

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**The *Parent & preschooler Newsletter* is Underwritten by Jane & Marty Schwartz**





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NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

*Multiple Year Winner of Parent's Choice Approval Award* *En Español*

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# Los Padres Como Modelos

## *Ayudando a su Hijo a Moverse por el Mundo con Humanidad*

Yo tengo un recuerdo muy intenso de mi padre. Está arrodillado mirando unos insectos y me está diciendo que sea bondadosa a todas las criaturas vivas. Así que, cuando yo tenía alrededor de ocho años y algunos niños estaban planeando torturar un sapo, ya sabía exactamente a quien acudir. Mi padre. Hasta hoy, en mi casa, nosotros atrapamos y sacamos a las arañas, y yo he tirado muchas lombrices de la vereda al herbaje húmedo.

¿Cómo llegamos a definir conductas aceptables? ¿Cómo aprenden los niños que hacer cuando alguien se topa con ellos, o cuando le propinan el último puño en el recreo? ¿Donde aprenden los niños a ser honestos o bondadosos? La respuesta es: de la conducta de los padres.

### *¿Por qué Nuestros Niños nos Necesitan Como Modelos?*

*Los padres son perfectos para ser los modelos para sus niños.

Nosotros somos la influencia más persistente en la vida de nuestros niños. Otros adultos van y vienen. Los vecinos, maestros, amigos, e incluso los parientes no están presentes tan continuamente como los padres.

Nosotros vemos a nuestros niños todos los días y cuando no estamos con ellos físicamente, saben que estamos cerca.

Además, investigaciones han demostrado que los modelos más fuertes son aquellos que son a la vez fuertes, cariñosos y cálidos. Los padres ciertamente tienen el poder en la familia (aunque a veces pareciera como si siempre estamos luchando para mantenerlo). Nosotros damos las recompensas y las consecuencias. Tenemos el poder de resolver las cosas en el mundo de nuestros niños.

También somos cálidos y cariñosos, por lo menos la mayoría de las veces. Cuando los niños se raspan las rodillas, nosotros los sanamos. Cuando no pueden dormir en la noche, los consolamos. Cuando tienen hambre, los alimentamos. Esta combinación de poder y cariño nos hace grandes modelos.

*Tenemos un Impacto en Todos los Ámbitos de las Vidas de Nuestros Niños Ya que siempre somos una parte de la vida de nuestros niños, siempre podemos ser un modelo apropiado en casi todas las circunstancias.

La manera que reaccionamos a nuestro trabajo le dice a nuestros niños como deben reaccionar a la escuela, y más tarde a su trabajo. Quejarse de nuestro empleo, del trabajo, de los jefes y supervisores se traspasa a nuestro niños. Hacer nuestro trabajo con entusiasmo y vigor también tiene influencia.

Por lo tanto, no se sorprenda si su niño empieza a reaccionar a la escuela o al jardín infantil de la misma manera que tu reaccionas cuando vas al trabajo.

¿Y qué pasa con las relaciones con la familia y amigos? Ser un buen hijo o hija con tus padres crea la posibilidad que tus hijos van a tener una conducta similar.

La manera en que tratas a tus amigos y a otros adultos le dice a tus niños como se deben comportar con sus amigos.

Los rasgos morales y de carácter provienen directamente de los padres: honestidad, solidaridad y bondad, respeto por los demás. Nosotros somos los primeros y mejores profesores de nuestros niños.

*Si nosotros no le enseñamos a nuestros niños, otros modelos mucho menos deseables se apropiaran del rol. Hay otros modelos por todas partes. Las estrellas de rock y de deportes, y los personajes de la televisión


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son solamente algunos de los modelos que están fácilmente disponible para nuestros niños. Pocos de ellos entregan patrones de conducta deseables que puedan seguir nuestros niños. Si nosotros no fijamos estándares con nuestra conducta, la conducta de esas personas se convertirá en el modelo.

*Podemos ayudar a nuestros niños a evaluar las acciones de otros, inoculándolos contra influencias menos deseables.

Cuando nuestros niños ven conductas o acciones contrarias a lo que creemos, podemos estar ahí para decirles "no, esa no es realmente la manera de comportarse".

¿Recuerda que la combinación de poder y cariño nos convierten en potentes modelos? Bueno, cuando explicamos por qué no es buena idea pegarle a alguien como los personajes animados, nuestras palabras combinadas con nuestras acciones contrarrestan la conducta del personaje en la televisión. Si nuestros niños imitan la conducta que ven en la televisión, o en los juegos de video, o películas, podemos explicar que en nuestro hogar, o en el mundo real, esa conducta no es aceptable. Nos creerán ya que tenemos nuestra propia conducta como ejemplo.

*Es nuestro trabajo. Es el trabajo que aceptamos cuando dijimos "oye, seamos padres". Quizás crees que tu trabajo es ser contador, abogado, electricista, u oficinista, pero no es así. Desde el momento que nos convertimos en padres nuestro empleo ha cambiado. Ahora somos un Padre y nuestra responsabilidad primaria es hacia el pequeño que trajimos al mundo.

Yo me acuerdo claramente preocupándome de mi hijo cuando era chico y mi hijo irritado diciéndome "no te preocupes". ¿Y bien, cuanta confianza te puede dar eso? Yo contestaba, "Es mi trabajo preocuparme". Es nuestro trabajo criar a nuestros niños, y hacerlo con cuidado y seriedad.

***Como Ser Modelo***

Ser un modelo es una responsabilidad seria, y hay ciertas cosas que tenemos que recordar.

*Son nuestras acciones tanto como nuestras palabras.
Cómo aprenden nuestros niños las conductas que valoramos? Ciertamente que nuestras palabras tienen impacto. Nosotros explicamos las reglas y por qué son importantes seguirlas. Comprobar las consecuencias de sus acciones también es vital. Si rompen las reglas de la familia, hay consecuencias. Pero los niños aprenden sobre las expectativas de su familia (y de la sociedad) observando la conducta de las personas que los rodean.

Nosotros queremos que nuestros niños tengan un conjunto de valores claros, y de la conducta que estos implican. Por lo tanto, la filosofía de "hace lo que digo, no lo que hago", sencillamente no funciona. Solo le enseña a nuestros niños que está bien decir una cosa y hacer otra. Incluso puede que repitan nuestras preciosas palabras a medida que imitan nuestras conductas menos admirables.

Es mejor dar un buen ejemplo. Cuando nos tratamos entre nosotros con respeto y consideración nuestros niños aprenden que esta es la manera en que ellos también deben comportarse. Si nos enojamos, agredimos y decimos cosas hirientes no debiésemos sorprendernos cuando nuestros niños hacen la misma cosa.

*Piense sobre las conductas sobre las cuales no piensa. Nuestros niños nos observan todo el tiempo, absorbiendo todo lo que ven y oyen (excepto, aparentemente, sobre nuestras exhortaciones de ir a limpiar sus cuartos). Pero no estamos acostumbrados a pensar que tenemos un público. Repase su día y piense sobre que sucedió. ¿Fue bien educado con su familia? ¿Acompaño con un "por favor" y "gracias" todas sus peticiones? ¿Que pasó cuando alguien llegó a la casa de mal humor? Las pataletas de un adulto son aun menos atractivas que la versión infantil, pero muy notorias y evidentes para nuestros niños. ¿Cómo actuamos cuando las cosas salieron mal? Incluso los adultos y los niños con mal genio pueden aprender a no agredir verbal o físicamente.

Piense sobre las lecciones morales que está dando. ¿Es honesto en sus relaciones con otros? Devolver el dinero que le dio por error la persona en la tienda da un mensaje completamente distinto que ufanarse sobre el dinero adicional a medida que sale de la tienda.

*Compórtese "en voz alta". Los niños solo aprenden lo que realmente perciben. Es importante hacer que sus acciones sean evidentes para sus niños. Su niño verá como resuelve sus problemas y dilemas.

Quizás se sienta un poco tonto diciendo "Voy a mandar dinero a (nombre de una organización de beneficencia)" pero le ayuda a su hijo a ver que estás ayudando a los pobres. "Mi mamá no se está sintiendo bien. Voy a ir a ver si necesita algo", le ayuda a su niño saber que estás haciendo y por qué.

*Refuerce la lección usando una frase específica para resumirla.
Cuando yo atrapaba arañas en tazas, y las llevaba a la puerta trasera para soltarlas, mí hijo me miraba extrañado como si estuviese preguntando "Qué objeto tiene todo eso"? y "Para qué?" Yo le explicaba "Todas las criaturas vivas quieren vivir".

Mientras esperas a que todos estén presentes antes de que la familia empiece a devorar la comida, puedes explicar "nosotros comemos como familia", o "se trata de respetar a tu mamá lo suficiente como para esperarla hasta que pueda estar con nosotros". Cualquiera sea el valor familiar, reesfuércelo con palabras. "Tenemos

tanto que podemos compartir". O, "No tomamos cosas que no nos pertenecen". O, "Cuando alguien te da algo decimos gracias".

Cualquier padre que ha pasado algún tiempo observando las vidas de sus hijos desarrollarse se reconocerá que no criamos a nuestros niños solos. Los niños tienen maestros en la pre-escuela, ayudantes de maestros, miembros de la familia, amigos de la familia. También están los entrenadores de deportes, los profesores de ballet, gimnasia y piano. Los padres de los amigos, el vecino que sale a jugar a la pelota, o que le está enseñando a hacer dulces, todos se convierten en maestros. Asegúrese que estén enseñando buenas lecciones.

Además, existen los modelos en la televisión, como los deportistas, las estrellas musicales, y los actores de cine y televisión. No sea tímido en comentar sobre sus acciones. Cuando vea conductas inaceptables, dígalo. No deje que sus niños decidan que hay distintas reglas para las personas famosas.

Finalmente, hay una razón, algo egoísta, para ser un buen modelo. No obstante como nos hemos comportado, cualquiera sean las acciones que hemos modelado para nuestros niños, tenemos el derecho que esas acciones sean extendidas a nosotros. Nosotros necesitamos el mismo trato. Cuando somos el modelo de respeto, tratar a las personas que nos rodean, incluyendo a nuestros niños, con inteligencia, tenemos el derecho moral de ser tratados de la misma manera. Opuestamente, si tratamos a nuestros niños con indiferencia, o con rabia u hostilidad abierta, no debiéramos sorprendernos que eso sea repetido en nosotros.

El mundo es incierto para los niños. No nacen sabiendo las reglas. Dependen de los adultos que los rodean para que les enseñen. Enseñémosles con conciencia.

Vea también: _Parenting Lessons; P&PN, V. 16 N.6; Junio-2001; Martha Edwards, Ph.D

***Neala S Schwartsberg, Ph.D. Es Editora de "Parent and preschooler Newsletter" y escribe sobre salud y desarrollo humano.***

## Los Modales son Importantes

Algunas personas creen que los modales están pasados de moda, y que en este mundo rápido y lleno de acción, los modales son algo del pasado. Pero si nos detenemos a pensar sobre el tema, quizás descubramos que los modales aun son muy importantes.

¿Qué les entregan los modales a nuestros niños y a nosotros? Nos ayudan a actuar con dignidad y confianza en cualquier situación. ¿Cómo es eso posible? Cuando uno conoce las reglas, uno nunca tiene miedo o dudas en ninguna situación. Si uno comprende completamente que se espera de uno en cualquier momento, entonces uno nunca está desprevenido.

***Los padres pueden ayudar a sus niños enseñándoles los elementos de los buenos modales.***

Primero, converse con su niño antes de una ocasión especial. Por ejemplo, antes de que vaya a la fiesta de cumpleaños de un amigo quizás pueda hablar con él sobre lo que va pasar en la fiesta, que debe hacer cuando llegue, como debe agradecer a los padres de su amigo por haberlo invitado, y sobre que juegos y comidas que pueden ser brindadas. Una vez que llegue a la fiesta se sentirá relajado por que no habrán sorpresas desagradables o incómodas.

Después del evento, tome algunos momentos para conversar sobre que pasó en la fiesta. Pregúntele cómo se sintió, que fue distinto de lo que había anticipado. Qué situación surgió que lo hizo sentir como si no supiera como reaccionar. Déjalo procesar el evento contigo para que le puedas ofrecer reacciones y más consejos.

A medida que pasa el tiempo, conversar sobre situaciones sociales del futuro se convertirá en costumbre. Tendrás la oportunidad de ofrecer sugerencias y consejos en un nivel de desarrollo apropiado. Por ejemplo, cuando su niño es muy joven, es suficiente darle recomendaciones y sugerencias muy sencillas. Reacuérdeles: Siempre recuerda decirle a la mamá de tu amigo "gracias"; o "siempre comparte los juguetes o los juegos con los otros niños en la fiesta". A medida que crece un poco, se necesitaran conversaciones mas complejas a medida que uno discute temas más sutiles, tales cómo responder a la mala conducta de otros niños o cómo rechazar algo que te ofrecen sin ofender los sentimientos de alguien.

"Si", los buenos modales son importantes. Hacen la vida más fácil y menos complicada para su niño y lo ayudan a sentirse más confiado y seguro en su mundo. ¿Quien sabe que valor a largo plazo tendrá esto? Depende de los padres ayudar a sus hijos encontrar el camino.

***Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour***

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# Postpartum Blues

Linda had just moved into a house in a new city. Her three-year-old had started nursery school and her six-month-old was a good baby but one who needed to nurse all the time. Linda called our agency to find out if we had any parenting programs for new mothers. She wanted to meet other mothers in the community and felt she could use the support. By the third meeting of this parenting group she looked exhausted and pale, and burst into tears when someone asked her if she was all right.

She did not want to talk in front of the group members, but after the meeting she spoke to the leader saying she hadn't felt well in months and she was tired all the time. "I yell at my three-year-old all day," she admitted. While she nursed her baby a lot, she didn't play with her. Her own mother tried to help, but Linda felt criticized and hated having to depend on her. Her husband, who came home from work too late to be of much help, was angry with her because nothing seemed to get done in the house.

✦ *Things got much better when Linda realized that it was depression that was making her feel so awful, and moved quickly to get the right mental health services for herself and her family. Currently, her children are doing well, and so is she.*

Alisha had her baby just six weeks ago. She was weepy all day and had trouble sleeping, but she was even more concerned about how scared she was of taking care of the baby. She had never bathed her son in the little tub on the counter and still refused to stay alone with him.

Alisha had planned and wanted this pregnancy and was surprised by her feelings. She was beginning to believe that she could never really be a good mother and even talked about wanting to place the baby up for adoption.

Her husband and mother told her that she needed help, leaving Alisha feeling even more overwhelmed and ashamed by how badly she was doing.

✦ *Alisha is moving along, perhaps more slowly than she would like. She began to talk to a social worker about how she was feeling. Her baby is doing well and things look brighter for the future.*

At about the same time, we got a call from a father worried that his wife was very depressed. He had a preschooler and his son's teacher had been complaining about the child's behavior.

A phone call from an anxious father is not a common occurrence at our center and he sounded genuinely alarmed. His wife had agreed to come in with him and an appointment was set up for later that week.

Charlotte arrived looking sullen, clearly dragged in by her husband and feeling that the finger was pointed at her for the problems in the family. She had been somewhat depressed when her son was born but had gone back to work fairly quickly. Charlotte admitted that she hadn't felt well in the hospital just after her second child (now nine months old) was born and she had been placed on an antidepressant.

She never followed up with psychiatric care or mental health treatment and after about three months took herself off the medication. Now, several months later, she was clearly distressed, irritable, tense and overwhelmed.

In addition, her infant had been diagnosed with a serious medical condition. Her days were bound by the constant therapy services for her baby and fighting with her older son. Her nights were spent arguing with

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her husband.

✦ *When it was suggested that maybe her "postpartum blues" had not gone away, Charlotte seemed surprised that it could last for months. She came in for counseling and, after she stopped blaming herself for the family's difficulties, was able to go back on antidepressant medication. She was also unhappy in her community and as she became stronger moved to a community she liked. She currently is able to recognize the successes in herself and her son, whose behavior in the preschool is now much improved.*

These mothers have many things in common; the stress of new motherhood, life challenges because of health or financial issues, a recent move and loss of emotional supports. But what they have most in common is that they were all suffering from depression. For all three it seemed to start with the harmless enough sounding "baby blues". The blues stayed however, gripping these women's lives with increasing tension.

**What are the baby blues?**

Most women who have had children are familiar with the "baby blues," the few hours or days of weepiness and fatigue that many mothers feel right after the birth of a child. The exhaustion and exhilaration of delivery, the lack of sleep and help, and the rapid change in hormones are all factors that contribute to a new mother's mood. But gradually, most new mothers regain their strength and their hormones stabilize. They start to fall in love with their new babies and their mood and energy level improve. The "baby blues" usually passes on its own and – with some support, education and patience – is forgotten quickly.

**When is it more?**

While the "blues" seem to occur in the first few days after delivery, postpartum depression can emerge several months after the delivery, often with an onset at about two months after birth. Many women may describe themselves as feeling awful from the first few day post partum, but other mothers describe increasing sadness and irritability as the weeks go by. Most women don't realize that they are at such great risk for depression in the postpartum period. They believe that things are supposed to be getting better, so why are they feeling worse?

New statistics are emerging as researchers begin to pay more careful attention to the emotional health of new mothers, but most studies suggest that between 12% and 16% of women experience a major depressive episode (Source: Current Psychiatry, May 2002) after the birth of a child, and a recent carefully designed survey for a New York maternity center brings the number much closer to 20% (Source: "Listening to Mothers: Report of the First National US Survey of Women's Childbearing Experiences"; Maternity Center Association; October-2002.) In the most frightening of possibilities, one or two of every 1,000 childrearing women will experience a psychotic episode, characterized by bizarre and dangerous behavior and thinking, within the first couple of months after delivery (Source: Zero to Three, June/July, 2002).

**What does depression look like?**

If you (or someone you know) has just had a baby, what do you need to know in order to safely and happily navigate the transition into new parenthood?

The first thing to know is what depression looks like. While many of us think of depression as sadness and tearfulness, it can be, and often is, much more. Agitation and difficulty sleeping, tension and extreme irritability, "cloudy " thinking and inability to make decisions are also part of the picture of depression.

Postpartum women who are depressed may have trouble loving their babies and can be quite critical even when talking about their newborns. "He is already so bad and spoiled," and "She is trying to manipulate me into getting what she wants," are statements parents have made about eight week old babies. Some women may be extremely critical of themselves, thinking they are doing poorly as mothers and believe that their babies won't love them.

Most women realize that something is not quite right. They worry that they are not feeling they way they are supposed to feel about motherhood. They may be ashamed and isolate themselves from family and friends because they cannot share what they experiencing.

In addition, some women with previous histories of anxiety disorders can re-experience their symptoms or develop panic attacks. They find themselves worrying excessively about their infants and having increasing preoccupation with health, feeding, sleeping and toileting issues. What starts as

## Postpartum Resources...

Support

- Postpartum Support International (PSI) 805-967-7636 www.postpartum.net, Information for healthcare professionals and consumers
- Depression After Delivery (DAD) 800-944-4PPD www.depressionafterdelivery.com; Nonprofit organization providing support, information and referrals
- Postpartum Resource Center of New York, Inc. 631-422-2255 www.postpartumNY.org; Provides educational information, and healthcare and support group referrals for New York State women and families

Books for Comsumers:

- *When Words Are Not Enough* by Valerie Raskin, MD, 1997
- *This Isn't What I Expected* by Karen Kleinman, M.S.W. and Valerie Raskin, M.D., 1994
- *Mothering the New Mother: Your Postpartum Resource Companion* by Sally Placksin, 1994
- *Overcoming Postpartum Depression & Anxiety* by Linda Sebastian, 1998
- *Shouldn't I Be Happy: Emotional Problems of Pregnant and Postpartum Women* by Shaila Misri, M.D.



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motherly concern becomes a rigid cycle of worrying that is exhausting for the mother to maintain.

**Who gets it?**

There are many factors that need to be considered when trying to diagnose postpartum maternal depression, or figure out who is at risk for having it. While many believe that the dramatically changing hormones following birth are a significant factor, all women who have delivered babies have major shifts in their hormones and most still do not experience depression.

We do know that there are some women who are at greater risk and that there are some life stressors that are significant risk factors.

**These include:**

- Previous history of depression – postpartum or at an earlier point in life
- Undiagnosed medical conditions in mother
- Medical complications in child
- Chronic sleep deprivation and fatigue
- Absence of supports, and increased sense of isolation
- Previous history of trauma and post traumatic stress
- Presence of mood disorder during pregnancy

**Everyone suffers**

When someone in a family suffers from a serious emotional difficulty, everyone suffers. And when it is a new mom, having to care for an infant, the consequences affect all family members and can be more dire.

New mothers who feel tired, weepy, irritable, and unloving towards their baby are often ashamed of their thoughts and feelings. While some appear to have lots of energy and seem on top of all their new responsibilities, most depressed mothers are aware of the gap between what they should be feeling, and how they really do feel. Shame and embarrassment lead to isolation, as women find themselves afraid to tell the truth.

New fathers are overwhelmed and scared by how their wives may be feeling and acting. They are often torn between being supportive and being angry and disappointed by the behavior they are witnessing. The stress is enormous on both the mother, who is trying to make sense of her emotions, and on the marriage, where the needs and demands of parenting are overwhelming both partners.

In addition, we have to pay attention to the babies. Infants need their mothers to be responsive and attentive. Postpartum depression can affect how a mother talks to her baby, and how she comforts and plays with him. Babies who grow up with depressed mothers can exhibit emotional and developmental delays, particularly in their language skills. Mothers who are emotionally unavailable make it harder for their children to understand their own feelings and mothers and children may both find themselves in a vicious cycle of unmanageable feelings and difficult behaviors.

It is important for the health of the whole family that a depressed mom gets help quickly.

**How to get help**

Postpartum depression is a serious medical issue, for mothers and their families, and must be addressed quickly and thoroughly.

It can be treated and there are many ways that women can be helped. The first is to seek a qualified professional to help make the right diagnosis. A front line practitioner in maternal and child health; i.e., social worker, psychologist, obstetrician, nurse or pediatrician, should be the first stop when a woman and her family think something is wrong.

An honest conversation about feelings is essential and a physical exam is usually recommended. Often a consultation with a psychiatrist is necessary to evaluate the need for medication. Many women get better quickly on the right medication and new research is emerging that may answer concerns about using medication for women who are nursing.

There are also many things women, and their families, can do to prevent additional emotional distress.

- Get help and support. Join a new mothers group, or parenting class at your library, health center, or community center. It's always easier to go through transitions and stressful times in the company of others in the same situation.
- Take care of yourself. Eating well, sleeping, and easy exercising may not sound like much, but they are all physically and emotionally restorative.
- Say "no" to extra demands. Maybe you usually have the family over for dinner on Sundays, but now may be the time to pass that off to someone else. If not, order food in and use paper plates.
- Talk. Talk to your partner, your friends, your parents, your health practitioner. You will be less isolated and ashamed when the thoughts and feelings are not locked inside you. If what you feel or say is worrisome, then your talking will help you get help quickly.
- Ask for help - not just mental health interventions, but help

with child care, house cleaning, more time off from work, or grocery shopping; this can help ease the pressure. There is lots of work for new mothers to do and a bit of a break can also give time to rest and recharge.

There has been more coverage in the press about maternal and postpartum depression in the past two years than we have seen before. It is important that women, and the people in their lives, are aware of these issues and know how to step in and help if there is a problem.

Many mothers and fathers have found kindness and support in their families, communities, and friends. They are grateful for shoulders to lean on and for help with child care and crazy car pool schedules.

For most women, the blues really do pass quickly, and are replaced with the normal joys and work of new parenthood.

***Sandy Wolkoff, CSW, is the Director of the Marks Family Right from the Start 0-3* Center. A freelance writer and early childhood specialist for more than 25 years, Ms. Wolkoff is a nationally recognized educator and consultant. Appearing frequently on television and radio, she is also director of the Maternal Depression Program at North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center.***

## Are YOU Experiencing Postpartum Depression?

There are questionnaires that medical and mental health specialists have developed that can help identify who is experiencing postpartum depression and struggling with a serious crisis. A professional can quickly assess if a woman is experiencing worrisome symptoms and is in need of additional supports and interventions.

***Some of the issues include:***

- *I have trouble sleeping, even when my baby sleeps.*
- *I feel like my emotions are on a roller coaster.*
- *I was afraid that I would never be my normal self again.*
- *I felt like I was not the mother I wanted to be.*
- *I got anxious over the littlest things that concerned my baby.*

Women who are quite depressed are overwhelmed by how they are feeling, their own suffering, and their fears that they are causing others to suffer. They may feel that life is not worth living. It is important to remember that postpartum depression can be treated. Please contact your local health or mental health practitioner or the Department of Mental Health in your city to locate services near you.

(Source: PDSS, Cheryl Tatana Beck, Ph.D and Robert K. Gable, Ed.D. copyright 2002, Western Psychological Services)

# Dear Reader ...

In spite of our cultural myths, having a baby is not quite a total joy and delight. Long hours of labor, too little sleep, discovering you are totally responsible for the helpless infant sleeping in the crib, radical hormonal changes, and concerns over finances are not part of the image, but are certainly part of the reality.

It's not surprising then that many mothers experience a case of the blues. And for some, it's actually a serious issue called maternal post partum depression.

For many years it's been shrugged off, and only now are people beginning to acknowledge the extent of the problem. This month, Sandy Wolkoff, CSW, Director of Right From The Start, has written the article you need to read if you, or someone you know has recently had a baby.

For those that have undergone stressful or difficult experiences, we've got *Write About It*, based on research by James Pennebaker, Ph.D.

The Federal government has finally recognized the importance of exerting control over the issue of organic food, and we're happy to tell you about it in the Health Corner.

It's Spring! A time of renewal of the earth (at least for those living above the equator) and the spirit. Plant some flowers, start some vegetable seeds, and enjoy.



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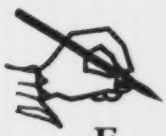
# *Write* About It



For centuries people have kept accounts of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. When we face traumatic events friends often advise us to keep a journal. The fact is that writing about our experiences, especially difficult ones, helps us to cope.

Dr. James W. Pennebaker, Ph.D. Professor of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin has spent years studying this intriguing phenomenon.

Participants are asked to write about the most upsetting experience in their lives, a major conflict, or a significant stressor for three to five consecutive days, 15 - 30 minutes each day. They are urged to explore their feelings and thoughts, perhaps examining how it relates to their childhood, relationship with their parents, people they have loved or love now. They consider how this experience relates to who they would like to become, have been in the past, or who they are now.

"Participants– from children to the elderly, from honor students to maximum security prisoners – disclose a remarkable range and depth of traumatic experiences," writes Pennebaker in Disclosing and Sharing Emotion: Psychological, Social and Health Consequences).

"The writing paradigm is exceptionally powerful," writes Pennebaker. Confronting deeply personal issues promotes physical health, and encourages a sense of well-being. Pennebaker and his colleagues found statistically significant drops in physician visits, enhanced immune functioning, elevated mood and other indicators of well-being.

Moreover, people who don't naturally talk about their emotional state benefit more from writing about traumatic experiences than more open individuals.

Writing about difficult experiences seems to help people find meaning as they try to understand what had happened - how and why - and seek some kind of coherence and order.

## How To Start

There are many ways to write about difficult experiences, however, Pennebaker suggests several guidelines.

- Find a quiet place and time. You don't want the kids pounding on the door, your spouse calling out questions, or your boss asking for a report.
- Write for at least 15 minutes a day for at least three or four consecutive days. In other words, take this seriously.
- Write continuously. Do a stream of consciousness thing if necessary, but keep writing. Don't stop and organize your desk. Don't worry about spelling or grammar. If you think you have nothing more to write, Pennebaker suggests you can even repeat yourself.
- Write, type, or talk. If you like the feel of a pen in your hand, write. If the thoughts flow easier at a keyboard, that's fine. If that kind of small muscle activity is difficult, don't hesitate to use a tape-recorder.
- Burn, save, or tear them up. The purpose is to be completely open and honest with yourself, to explore your feelings and thoughts. It's the process that's useful, not the pieces of paper or audio tape. You can tear up the pages, re-use the audio tape. Or, if you want, you can hold them for a while and then go back and reread them to see how you've changed. And if you want to edit them, go ahead. They are a reflection of your thoughts and emotions, and as the inner ones change, the outer manifestation can change too.

For more information:
📖 ***Opening Up: The healing power of expressing emotion*** by James Pennebaker; Guilford Press, New York; 1997.
You can also visit his website at:
**http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/HomePage/Faculty/Pennebaker**

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## *The Vernal Equinox and the Myth of the Balanced Egg*

On March 20th at 8 PM (Eastern Standard Time), Spring will officially begin. That's the date and time of the vernal equinox when the length of the day and the night are equal. Actually an equinox happens twice a year, one in autumn (the autumnal equinox) and spring (the vernal equinox). The vernal equinox is considered to be the first day of Spring. And after a long winter, it certainly is welcomed.

Have you ever heard that at the exact moment of the equinox you can balance a egg on its end? Well, we've discovered that it's not true. We don't know when or where it got started but according to Von Del Chamberlain, former director of Hansen Planetarium in Salt Lake City, Utah, and participating astronomer in Project ASTRO (a science partnership between teachers, students, and astronomers) it's difficult but you can balance an egg on its end at any time of the year.

"Standing an egg on end on a hard and smooth surface, such as a kitchen counter top, requires care and patience, but it can be done any time of year," says Chamberlain in his article Equinox Means Balanced Light, Not Balanced Eggs (http://www.clarkfoundation.org/astro-utah/vondel/equinoxver.html).

If you'd like to try it yourself, at any time of year, Chamberlain suggests the following. Take a fresh, uncooked egg and hold it with the larger end resting on a table or counter top. Wait for the content of the egg to settle, then carefully test the balance. "Be patient as you find the point where you can ever so gently let it go to remain standing on end."

# Eating Organic

For years people who wanted to eat and serve their families organic foods had to rely on the honesty of others. There were no Federal government standards and no regulations. And we won't even go into the difficulty finding organic products.

Over time, it's become a bit easier. Supermarkets have begun to carry organic produce and canned goods. Specialty stores and chain groceries carry offer larger and larger selections.

Missing, however, was any kind of certainty that you were actually purchasing organic products.

Recently the Federal government has come to consumers' rescue. Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to formulate national standards to assure consumers that agricultural products marketed as organic actually meet objective and uniform standards.

**What's Organic?**

The regulations prohibit the use of genetic engineering, ionizing radiation, and sewage sludge in organic production and handling. Generally, natural (non-synthetic) substances are allowed in organic production and synthetic substances are prohibited. If it's made by Mother Nature, it's okay, if it's made in a laboratory, it isn't. There are some exceptions which can be found in the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-Synthetic Substances.

Organic crops are raised without most conventional pesticides, petroleum-based fertilizers, or sewage sludge-based fertilizers. Animals, to be considered as a source of organic products, must be fed organic feed and given access to the outdoors. They can't be given antibiotics or growth hormones.

**Different Levels of Organic**

Regulations do allow for different levels of organic, so consumers need to read carefully.

**100% Organic**

Anything labeled 100 percent organic must contain only organically produced ingredients. No non-organic materials can be included.

**Organic**

Products labeled organic must consist of at least 95% organically produced ingredients.

Both categories, 100% Organic and Organic, may display the USDA Organic seal. So, if you want to be assured that the product you're buying is organic, look for the USDA logo.

**Made with Organic Ingredients**

The regulations do allow for products made with lesser amounts of organic ingredients. When the product is made with at least 70% organic ingredients the product can be labeled Made with Organic Ingredients. However, they cannot display the USDA organic logo.

Finally, processed products can still use some organic ingredients. But if it contains less than 70% organic ingredients it can not be called organic. A can of vegetable soup, for example, may say it is made with organic corn on the ingredient list but it can't call itself an organic soup if there is less than 70% organic material.

**Who's Watching the Farms?**

These products, labeled as organic, must originate from farms and handling operations certified by a State or private entity that has been accredited by the USDA.

There are clear requirements that organic production and handling operations must meet. For example, they have to submit information on the substances used in production, and on the handling practices to prevent mixing of organic and non-organic products.

**Why Buy Organic?**

According to Children's Environmental Health Network (www.cehn.org), "Currently, use of more than 70,000 chemicals is allowed in the United States. Little is known about the health effects of the majority of these chemicals on children." We didn't evolve eating these substances, we've made them along the way to preserve the color, or the texture of food, or keep it fresher longer, or keep weeds and insects from eating the food in the field. Many people are reluctant to eat these chemicals, or feed them to their children. Now, the government has made it easier for people to make informed choices, to know what they are eating, and what they aren't eating.

**Natural is Not Organic**

You may see claims that a product is "natural." Too many manufacturers like to attach this word to their products in order to give it a healthy image. Don't be fooled. This is not a regulated term and is not the same as a product being certified as organic.

# Thinking About Summer Camp 😐 ALREADY ! ! !

"It's only the beginning of March - it just can't be time to look at summer camps so soon!" you're thinking. There are only two and a half months left in the school year for most kids and many camps will be taking reservations and accepting deposits very soon if not already.

If you begin thinking about finding a camp for your preschooler, you will readily come up with some camp names. Perhaps a friend has told you about a camp or one of your child's friends has already had a good camp experience. These kinds of references and referrals are very valuable. This would be the perfect time to call that friend or the parents of your child's friend to ask some questions that will set you on the right path.

### What Questions Should I Ask?

First it is important to decide the kind of camp you think might be best for your child. So the first question might be: "What kind of camp it is?" It might be a day camp, a sleep-over camp, a specialty camp designed to specific interests such as sports, or a special-needs camp for kids with special emotional or physical requirements.

Another question would be: "What is the staff-to-camper ratio?" This is very important because preschoolers need more supervision and, therefore, a smaller ratio is better.

Although some camps have a lot of very fancy facilities and special activities, the most important thing is that children begin to learn some important life lessons. So, another question might have to do with how the camp helped their child to find friends, learn new things, and work and share with others.

A big question, of course, has to be cost. And also find out the extra costs as well. What is the base price, does that include transportation and meals or are these extras? Is there financial aid available as well as scholarships? If so what is the criteria for application for these things? If the camp offers the kids trips or special activities, is that included in the tuition or is that also an extra? What kind of insurance does the camp carry? Will you have to get special insurance coverage for your child privately?

It's also nice to know how the camp handles such things as special medical needs, the age range of the campers, how the day is structured and paced, and what safety considerations are taken with the facility and equipment? If the camp provides swimming facilities, how are children monitored and kept safe?

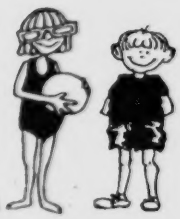
Finally, ask what the return rate is for that camp. It's nice to know that kids like to return again and again to a camp. This means that the environment is probably a stable camping community with not only campers who return but counselors as well. Kids tend to return to places where counselors have made them feel comfortable and safe and where their peers seemed to match them in many ways. Kids who like music tend to want to find other kids who like music and so on.

### Time to Talk

Once you have some ideas about the kinds of camps that are available, you need to talk to your child about the idea of camp. For many preschoolers overnight camp might be too frightening so daycamp would be a better choice. Never force camp on a child. Ask your child how he feels about camp and then listen. He will absolutely tell you whether camp might be a good or not so good idea this summer.

### Visit the Camp

If your child says "yes" then it's time to start visiting camps and seeing for yourself what is being offered. The same questions you asked friends are the very questions to ask the camp administrators. You might also want to ask a camp director how he hires counselors. What criteria or expertise is required for the job? What special skills or knowledge do counselors have at that



camp? What are the credentials, background, and experience of the camp director? Is the camp owner also the camp director? How long has she been the camp director? What is her philosophy for that camp and how does she facilitate that philosophy? (Note: A camp should have set goals for the camping experience. Find out how those goals are met.) And, talk in depth about the medical, safety, and emergency care available at the camp. Is there a nurse and doctor on site every day? Does the camp staff all know CPR and life-saving techniques. How about water safety training? All are vital considerations.

Now you're ready to make a decision. Choosing the right camp can have far-reaching benefits for you and for your child. It will help her in her journey toward independence while helping her find and develop the special talents she has.

*Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour*

**Resources:**

- National Camp Association; 800-966-2267
- American Camping Association; 765-342-8456

**On the Web:**

- **www.summer-daycamps.com**
- **daycamps/net**

**wwwcampchannel.com**

- **www.crossconservation.org/summerdaycamps.html**

# Library Resources

## Books With a Message

📖 ***The Best Place*** by Susan Meddaugh; Houghton Mifflin Company; Boston; 1999; Hardcover $15.00. Old wolf hasn't seen much of the world so, as much as he loves his house and porch, he undertakes a journey. But he misses his home and decides he wants it back. A series of mis-adventures occurs and wolf understands that you can find something even better, loving friends.

📖 ***The Dreamtime Fairies*** by Jane Simmons; Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 2002; Hardcover $15.95. A lovely bedtime book about two siblings who go to find the Dreamtime Fairies to help them sleep. Gentle and soothing, with a message not to be afraid of the dark, because that's where the fairies live.

📖 ***The Feelings Book*** by Todd Parr; Megan Tingley Books (Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 2000; $5.95. Children have all different kinds of feelings. They may feel silly, or cranky, or they may want to sit in a bathtub all day. Simple text and illustrations depict a range of children's possible feelings (and parents' too).

📖 ***Luna and the Big Blur: A story for children who wear glasses*** by Shirley Day; illustrated by Don Morris; Magination Press (American Psychological Association: www.apa.org/books); Washington, DC; 1995; Hardcover. Luna hates wearing glasses. One night she dreams that she doesn't need them any more. The next morning she's determined to see without them. It doesn't work the way she hoped, and after a series of mishaps, she decides it's better to see with glasses than trip over skates. The book also includes her father explaining what being near-sighted means and why Luna needs to wear the glasses.

📖 ***No More Vegetables!*** by Nicole Rubel; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York; 2002; Hardcover $16.00. Ruthie doesn't want to eat vegetables. And, her parents agree, as long as she helps Mom work in the garden. With the vegetables right there, one day Ruthie tries a cherry tomato, and some peas, finding that she enjoys them. And that's how Ruthie begins to love vegetables.

📖 ***Pet Show!*** by Ezra Jack Keats; Puffin Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 2001; Paperback $6.99. Keats actually died in 1983, but his beloved books live on as popular as ever, one of the few series that use the inner city as a backdrop for stories. There's going to be a pet show. Everyone is bringing pets. All the kids are winning prizes but cats are independent creatures and Archie's can't be found. So, Archie, resourceful as ever, shows up with a germ. The judges puzzle over this and decide ... a blue ribbon for the quietest pet.

📖 ***Shadow Night*** by Kay Chorao; Dutton Children's Books; New York; 2001; Hardcover $15.99. The shadows in his room are keeping James awake and afraid. His parents come in and show him how to make shadow animals, insects, and reptiles. His parents leave and James becomes anxious again, then he begins to play his own shadow games and falls asleep.

📖 ***Top of the World*** by Holly Hobbie; Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 2002; Hardcover $15.95. Toot and Puddle have a free-spirited adventure. Toot goes for a walk and doesn't come back. Puddle becomes concerned and goes looking for him. Wandering with friends is fun and when you've had enough you can go home. "I love to go off on a trip, and then when the time comes, I love to get back home," sums up Toot.

📖 ***When I Feel Scared*** by Cornelia Maude Spelman; illustrated by Kathy Parkinson; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, Il.; 2002; Hardcover. A little bear talks about what it feels like to be scared, what frightens him, about how feeling scared can keep him safe, and what he does to feel better. A wonderful book to use with young children to explore their feelings.

**- Now Out in Paperback**

📖 ***Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!*** by Mem Fox; illustrated by Marla Frazee; Voyager Books (Harcourt Children's Books); New York; 2003; Softcover, $6.00. We loved this book in hardcover, and we love it even more at a more affordable price. Harriet doesn't mean to get into mischief, but things just seem to happen. Her mother doesn't mean to lose her temper and scream, but things just piled up too high. When they're doing things they wish they hadn't, they can apologize, and love each other very much.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NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

*Multiple Year Winner of Parent's Choice Approval Award* *En Español*

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# Tristeza Post Parto

Linda acababa de mudarse a una casa en una ciudad nueva. Su niño de tres años había empezado la pre-escuela y su niño de seis meses era un buen bebé pero necesitaba que le dieran pecho todo el tiempo. Linda llamó a nuestra agencia para averiguar si teníamos programas para nuevas madres. Quería conocer otras madres de la comunidad y sentía que podía usar la ayuda. En la tercera reunión de este grupo de padres ella se veía agotada y pálida y se puso a llorar cuando alguien le preguntó si estaba bien.

Ella no quería hablar en frente de los miembros del grupo, pero después de la reunión habló con el líder del grupo y le dijo que no se había sentido bien en meses y que siempre estaba cansada. "Le grito a mi niña de tres años todo el día", reconoció. A pesar de que le daba mucho pecho a su bebé, no jugaba con ella. Su propia madre intentó ayudar, pero Linda se sentía criticada y odiada por tener que depender de ella. Su marido, que llegaba a la casa del trabajo demasiado tarde como para poder ayudar en algo, estaba enojado con ella porque nadie hacía el trabajo doméstico.

**Las cosas mejoraron cuando Linda se dio cuenta que era depresión lo que la hacía sentirse tan mal, y se movilizó rápidamente para obtener el servicio de salud mental para ella y su familia. Actualmente, sus niños y ella están bien.*

Alicia tuvo su bebé solo hace seis semanas. Ella sollozaba todo el día y tenía problema en conciliar el sueño, pero estaba más preocupada sobre cuan asustada estaba en cuanto a poder cuidar a su bebé. Ella nunca había bañado a su hijo en la pequeña tina que tenia sobre el mueble y todavía se negaba a quedarse sola con él.

Alicia había planificado y deseado este embarazo y estaba sorprendida por sus sentimientos. Estaba empezando a creer que ella nunca realmente podría ser una buena madre e incluso habló sobre entregar el bebé para su adopción.

Su marido y madre le dijeron que necesitaba ayuda, lo que hizo a Alicia sentirse más abrumada y avergonzada sobre lo mal que lo estaba haciendo.

**Alicia está progresando, quizás un poco más lento de lo que ella desearía. Empezó a conversar con una trabajadora social sobre las cosas que sentía. Su bebé está bien y las cosas se ven favorables en el futuro.*

Casi al mismo tiempo recibimos una llamada de un padre preocupado porque su esposa estaba muy deprimida. Él tenía un niño preescolar y la profesora de su hijo había estado quejándose sobre la conducta del niño.

Una llamada de un padre angustiado no es una cosa común en nuestro centro y él parecía genuinamente alarmado. Su esposa había acordado e venir con él y se había concertado una cita para los próximos días.

Carla llegó con aspecto resentida, francamente obligada a venir por su marido y sintiendo que todos le echaban la culpa por los problemas de la familia. Ella había estado levemente deprimida cuando había nacido su hijo pero había vuelto al trabajo bastante rápidamente. Carla reconoció que no se había sentido bien en el hospital después que su segundo niño (que ahora tiene nueve meses) había nacido y se le había administrado un medicamento antidepresivo.

Ella nunca hizo un seguimiento con atención siquiátrica o terapia de salud mental y después de tres meses dejó de tomar su medicamento. Ahora, varios meses después, estaba claramente alterada, irritable, tensa y abrumada.

Además, su bebé había sido diagnosticado con una seria condición médica. Sus días estaban consumidos por constantes terapias para su

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bebé y por peleas con su hijo mayor. En la noche se la pasaba alegando con su marido.

**Cuando se sugirió que quizás su "tristeza post parto" no había desaparecido, Carla parecía sorprendida que pudiese durar meses. Vino a terapia y, después de que dejó de culparse a si misma por las dificultades de la familia, pudo volver a tomar los medicamentos antidepresivos. Ella también estaba infeliz en su barrio y a medida que recuperó la fuerza ella se mudó a un suburbio que le gustaba. Actualmente es capaz de reconocer sus éxitos y los de su hijo, cuya conducta en la pre-escuela ha mejorado bastante.*

Estas madres tienen muchas cosas en común: el estrés de ser nuevas madres, desafíos de la vida por problemas de salud o de dinero, una mudanza reciente y la perdida de soporte emocional. Pero lo que más tienen en común es que todas estaban sufriendo depresión. Para las tres todo pareció empezar con lo que se llama inocuamente "tristeza del bebé" ("baby blues"). Sin embargo, la tristeza no desapareció, atrapando las vidas de estas mujeres con mas tensión.

**¿Qué es la tristeza del bebé?**

La mayoría de las mujeres que han tenido niños reconocen la "tristeza del bebé", las pocas horas o días de sollozos y fatiga que muchas madres sufren después del nacimiento de un bebé. La fatiga y la euforia del parto, la falta de sueño y de ayuda, y el rápido cambio en hormonas son todos factores que contribuyen al estado de animo de la nueva madre. Pero paulatinamente, la mayoría de las nuevas madres recuperan sus fuerzas y sus hormonas se estabilizan. Empiezan a enamorarse de sus nuevos bebés y su animo y nivel de energía mejoran. La tristeza generalmente desaparece sola y --con apoyo, educación y paciencia-- se olvida rápidamente.

**¿Cuando es algo más que eso?**

A pesar de que la tristeza parece ocurrir en los primeros días después del parto, la depresión post parto puede aparecer varios meses después del parto, frecuentemente con una presentación de aproximadamente de alrededor de dos meses después del nacimiento. Muchas mujeres pueden describirse a si mismas como sintiéndose pésimas desde los primeros días post parto, pero otras madres describen un aumento de tristeza e irritabilidad a medida que pasan las semanas. La mayoría de las mujeres no se dan cuenta que están en alto riesgo de depresión en el período post parto. Ella creen que las cosas supuestamente deben estar mejorando, así que ¿por qué se están sintiendo peor?

Están surgiendo nuevas estadísticas a medida que los investigadores empiezan a prestarle más atención a la salud emocional de las nuevas madres, sin embargo la mayoría de los estudios sugieren que entre el 12% y 16% de las mujeres experimentan un episodio importante de depresión (Fuente: Current Psychiatry, May 2002) después del nacimiento de un niño, y una reciente encuesta cuidadosamente diseñada para un centro maternal de Nueva York arroja una cifra más cerca al 20% (Fuente: "Listening to Mothers: Report of the First National US Survey of Women's Childbearing Experiencies;" Maternity Center Asscociation: October - 2002). Entre las posibilidades más alarmantes, una o dos de cada 1.000 mujeres que han tenido hijos tendrán un episodio sicótico, caracterizado por conductas y pensamientos anormales y peligrosos, durante los primeros dos meses después del parto (Fuente: Zero to Three, June/July, 2002).

**¿Cómo es la depresión?**

Si tu (o alguien que conoces) acaba de tener un bebé, ¿qué debes saber para poder enfrentar con seguridad y felicidad la transición a ser padres?

La primera cosa que hay que saber es cómo es la depresión. A pesar de que muchos de nosotros creemos que la depresión es tristeza y llantos, puede ser, y muchas veces lo es, mucho más. La agitación y problemas del sueño, tensión y excesiva irritabilidad, pensamiento "confuso" y la incapacidad de adoptar decisiones también son parte del cuadro depresivo.

Las mujeres post parto que están deprimidas pueden tener problemas de querer a sus bebés y pueden ser muy criticas aun cuando hablan sobre sus recién nacidos. "Ya está tan malo y consentido". y "Ella trata de manipularme para conseguir lo que quiere", son afirmaciones que han hecho los padres sobre bebés de ocho semanas. Algunas mujeres son extremadamente criticas de si mismas, pensando que no están haciendo un buen papel de madre y creen que sus bebés no las amarán.

La mayoría de las mujeres se dan cuenta que algo no anda bien. Se preocupan que no están sintiendo lo que debieran sentir sobre la maternidad. Pueden estar avergonzadas y se aíslan de la familia y amigos porque no pueden compartir lo que están sintiendo.

Además, algunas mujeres con historial previo de desordenes de angustia pueden reexperimentar sus síntomas o desarrollar ataques de pánico. Se encuentran preocupándose excesivamente sobre sus bebés y además tienen un aumento de preocupación por la salud, alimentación, sueño y los problemas de higiene. Lo que empieza como preocupaciones maternales se convierte en un ciclo rígido de preocupación que es extenuante para la madre.

**¿A quien le da?**

Hay muchos factores que deben tomarse en cuenta cuando se trata de diagnosticar la depresión maternal post parto, o saber quien está a riesgo de adquirirla. Mientras que muchos creen que los cambios dramáticos en las hormonas después del parto son un factor importante, todas las mujeres que han tenido bebés tienen cambios importantes en sus hormonas y la mayoría de

ellas no experimentan depresión.

Sí sabemos que hay algunas mujeres que están a más riesgo y que hay algunos estreses que son importantes factores de riego.

**Estos incluyen:**
* Historial previo de depresión –post parto o en algún momento previo de la vida.
* Una condición médica no diagnosticada en la madre.
* Falta de sueño y fatiga crónica.
* Falta de apoyo y un aumento de la sensación de aislamiento.
* Historial de trauma y estrés post traumático previo.
* La presencia de un desorden de ánimo durante el embarazo.

**Todos Sufren**

Cuando alguien en la familia sufre de una dificultad emocional seria todos sufren. Y cuando es una nueva madre, que tiene que cuidar un bebé, las consecuencias afectan a todos los miembros de la familia y pueden ser más serias.

Las nuevas madres que se sienten cansadas, con ganas de llorar, irritables, y que no sienten amor hacia su bebé generalmente están avergonzadas de sus pensamientos y sentimientos. Mientras que algunas parecen tener mucha energía y parecen manejar todas sus nuevas responsabilidades, la mayoría de las madres están concientes de la brecha entre lo que debieran estar sintiendo y lo que realmente sienten. La vergüenza y bochorno conducen al aislamiento, a medida que las mujeres tienen miedo de decir la verdad.

Los nuevos padres están abrumados y asustados por lo que sus esposas pueden estar sintiendo o haciendo. A menudo sienten la contradicción entre apoyar y estar enojados y desilusionados por la conducta que están presenciando. El estrés es enorme en la madre, que está tratando de comprender sus emociones, y en el matrimonio, donde las necesidades y demandas de ser padres son abrumadoras en ambos cónyuges.

Además, tenemos que prestarle atención a los bebés. Los bebés necesitan que sus madres les presten atención y que respondan. La depresión post parto puede afectar la manera en que la madre le habla a su bebé, y como lo consuela y juega con él. Los bebés que se crían con madres deprimidas pueden presentar retrasos emocionales y de desarrollo, especialmente en sus destrezas del lenguaje. La madres que no están disponibles emocionalmente hacen que sea más difícil que sus niños entiendan sus propios sentimientos, y las madres y los niños pueden encontrarse en círculos viciosos de sentimientos inmanejables y conductas difíciles.

Es importante para la salud de toda la familia que una mamá deprimida reciba ayuda rápidamente.

**Como obtener ayuda**

La depresión post parto es un problema médico serio, para las madres y sus familias, y tiene que ser abordado rápida e integralmente.

Puede ser tratado y hay muchas maneras en que las mujeres pueden ser ayudadas. La primera es buscar a un profesional calificado para que ayude a hacer el diagnóstico apropiado. Un profesional de primera línea en salud materno infantil; es decir, un trabajador social, psicólogo, obstetra, enfermera o pediatra, debe ser la primera visita cuando una mujer y su familia piensan que algo está mal.

Una conversación honesta sobre emociones es esencial y generalmente se recomienda un examen físico. Frecuentemente una consulta con un siquiatra es necesaria para evaluar la necesidad de medicamentos. Muchas mujeres se recuperan rápidamente con el medicamento apropiado y están emergiendo nuevas investigaciones que puede contestar las preocupaciones sobre usar medicamentos mientras las madres dan pecho.

Hay muchas cosas que las mujeres y sus familias pueden hacer para evitar sufrimiento emocional adicional.

* Obtener ayuda y apoyo. Intégrese a un grupo de madres de recién nacidos, o a una clase de padres en su biblioteca, centro de salud, o centro comunitario. Siempre es más fácil pasar por transiciones y momentos de estrés en la compañía de otros que están en la misma situación.

* Cuídese lo más que pueda. Comer bien, dormir, y ejercicio suave no parece ser mucho, pero son restauradores físicos y emocionales.

* Diga "no" a tareas adicionales. Quizás normalmente invitas a la familia a comer todos los domingos, pero ahora puede ser el momento de darle la tarea a otro. Si no, compre comida preparada y use platos de papel.

* Converse. Háblele a su cónyuge, a sus amigos, a sus padres, a su médico. Estarás menos aislada y avergonzada cuando los pensamientos no están encerrados dentro de ti. Si lo que sientes y dices es preocupante, tu conversación te ayudará a obtener la ayuda que necesitas rápidamente.

* Pide ayuda -no solamente intervenciones de salud mental, sino ayuda para cuidar al bebé, limpiar la casa, más tiempo libre del trabajo, y ayuda con las compras en el supermercado. Todo esto puede aliviar la presión. Hay mucho trabajo para las madres de los recién nacidos y un pequeño descanso también puede darle el tiempo para descansar y renovar las energías.

Ha habido mucho más cobertura en la prensa sobre la depresión materna y post parto durante los últimos dos años de lo que hemos visto antes. Es importante que las mujeres, y las personas que comparten sus vidas, tengan conciencia de estos problemas y sepan como

intervenir y ayudar si hay un problema.

Muchas madres y padres han encontrado bondad y apoyo en sus familias, comunidades y amigos. Están agradecidos de tener a personas sobre quien apoyarse y de poder tener ayuda para el cuidado de los niños y los difíciles horarios para el transporte de los niños.

Para la mayoría de las mujeres, la tristeza realmente pasa rápidamente, y es reemplazada con la felicidad normal y trabajo de ser nuevas madres.

Sandy Wolkoff, CSW, es la Directora de Marks Family Right from the Start 0-3+ Center. Es escritora independiente y especialista en párvulos por más de 25 años, la Sa. Wolkoff es una educadora y consultora reconocida a nivel nacional. Aparece frecuentemente en televisión y radio, y también es directora del programa de Depresión Materna en el North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center.

**¿Estás experimentando depresión post parto?**

Hay cuestionarios que han sido desarrollados por especialistas médicos y de salud mental que pueden ayudar a identificar a las personas que están sufriendo de depresión post parto y están lidiando con una crisis seria. Un profesional puede rápidamente evaluar si una mujer está experimentando síntomas preocupantes y necesita apoyo o intervenciones adicionales.

**Algunos de estos problemas incluyen:**

* Tengo problemas de insomnia, incluso cuando mi bebé duerme.
* Siento que mis emociones son muy inestables.
* Tenía miedo que nunca iba a ser normal otra vez.
* Sentía que no era la madre que quería ser.
* Me angustiaba por las cosas más sencillas que afectaban a mi bebé.

Las madres que están muy deprimidas se abruman por lo que están sintiendo, su propio sufrimiento, y sus temores de que le están causando sufrimiento a otros. Pueden pensar que no vale la pena vivir. Es importante recordar que la depresión post parto puede ser tratada. Por favor comuníquese con su profesional local de salud o con un especialista en salud mental o con el Departamento de Salud Mental de su ciudad para ubicar servicios cerca suyo.

(Fuente: PDSS, Cerril Tatana Beck, Ph.D., and Robert K. Gable, Ed.D. copyright 2002, Western Psychological Services)

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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

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NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

*Multiple Year Winner of Parent's Choice Approval Award*

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# Answering Life's *BIG* Questions

Five-year-old Allison came home from preschool excited about the arrival of a new girl in class. She told her mom all about her new friend. Then suddenly she became very serious - abruptly changing the subject to one that caught her mother completely off guard. "Where did I come from?" she asked with much gravity. Her mom was truly surprised that THE BIG question had come up when her daughter was still so young. But, she had promised herself that, when she had kids, she would be ready with the answers - not like her own parents who had stumbled along providing non-answers until the questions were no longer relevant. So, getting out the books and illustrations and taking Allison onto her lap, she spent nearly an hour explaining reproduction in a gentle, age-appropriate way. Finishing up, and feeling very enlightened and proud, she asked Allison if she had any questions. Looking up at her mother Allison said "Well, my friend Gina said she came from Chicago so I was just wondering where I came from."

• The images were everywhere. No matter how hard they tried, Evelyn and Jamal could not prevent their three-year-old son, Mitch, from seeing those scenes of the horrible tragedy - over and over and over again. Then the nightmares started, followed by Mitch's increased withdrawal from everyday activities. Evelyn and Jamal just didn't know how to help their child. They were afraid to even approach the subject with him because they just didn't have any answers.

• Walking down the street with her young son Alex, Serafina was embarrassed by the many nude and semi-nude photos that appeared on so many newspapers and magazine covers as they passed the corner newsstand. Alex looked and Serafina tried to distract him, asking him questions about his pre-k class and his teachers and friends. She thought he had forgotten those images until he appeared after dinner in the living room completely naked. Serafina and Alex's father, David, were distressed. Rushing Alex into his room and getting him dressed, Alex looked mystified by his parent's obvious discomfort. He just couldn't understand why he had to put on his clothes on. The people in the pictures didn't. Serafina and David were just as mystified - but for a different reason - how could they talk to him about it? What could they say? How did you talk about sexuality to a three-year-old?

• Bridget went to daycare one morning to find a new child there walking with crutches and talking with slurred speech. The little girl looked "different" and acted "different" from the other children. Bridget felt uneasy and uncomfortable. She decided that she didn't want to go to daycare any more. Her parents were



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puzzled, then, after much prompting, Bridget blurted out her feelings about this new child. Her mother and father were astonished. They just weren't prepared to talk to their daughter about "special needs" children and disabled adults. They had no language or guidelines.

• Elijah was only four years old when his pet parakeet died. He was sad and withdrawn and didn't understand how this could have happened. His father searched for words to explain and comfort him. Death was such a huge concept and Elijah seemed so young and so vulnerable.

These are a few hypothetical instances of the BIG questions that every parent must face sooner or later. How we answer these questions makes a big difference in how children view their world. Is the world something that can be understood? Are there guidelines for behavior that make things easier? Can a child feel empowered in any situation? What is acceptable and what isn't? All of these questions face parents as their children grow and function in their environment.

### How Do We Start?

There are some questions that we can anticipate and the first and most important thing for parents to do is to be prepared. Think about what your child might face in any given day - and prepare yourself with simple, truthful, age-appropriate responses.

Remember that "touchy" subjects may make you feel uncomfortable and being prepared for the questions will help you feel less uncomfortable and more in control. Even a first line will help. If you're not sure about your answer - do a little reading and research on your own before a subject comes up.

Lillian's son Donald once asked her why he couldn't have a slingshot when two of his friends had them. Lillian knew about the friends' slingshots and so she was prepared to have the conversation with Donald. Her first line was: "...because, in our family, we don't believe in using things that might hurt someone." This was a nice way for Lillian to give her son a sense of the family's values as a truthful reason for not having a slingshot. This first line started a discussion that satisfied Donald.

### Understand the Question

It is important for parents to know just what their child is asking. As with Allison and her mom, before the entire discussion took place, it might have been helpful for her mom to simply ask Allison a pointed question. Allison said "Where did I come from?" Her mother might have first asked "Why do you ask?" Or she could have said "Why don't you tell me what you already know about this subject." This would have turned the situation into a very different one. The BIG question had really not come up - Allison wasn't ready to ask that question, in fact, she probably hadn't even thought about that question as yet in her life.

### You Don't Have to be Prepared for Everything

Whenever we are faced with one of the BIG questions, and we feel unprepared, it is perfectly all right to tell our child that we have to think about it before we answer. We can explain that it is a very important question and one that we want to answer in the very best way we can, so, we would like to make a special time to talk about it. Then collect your thoughts and set a time when you will both be able to have a moment together. Be sure to follow-up on those plans and meet with your child in a comfortable, private place.

### Sexual Issues and Questions

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by what is available to our children that we cannot control. Sometimes their behavior upsets us. And sometimes they ask questions that leave us fumbling for answers. The thing that is important for parents to remember about all behavior of a sexual nature is that their values and beliefs are valid but that parents should never discuss sexual behavior in a way that makes children feel that they have done something wrong.

Very little children often find pleasure in nudity and when they see it around them in a public place they just may come to the conclusion that it is acceptable public behavior.

"It is important for parents to help their child find a positive body image," says Bruce Kaufstein, ACSW, a Psychiatric Social Worker, Clinic Coordinator for North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, and the father of two sons. "Re-enforce the idea that the

**F.Y.I.** ***Parent & preschooler Newsletter*** **has covered several of these *BIG* questions ...**

- *Children and Grief: How Parents Can Help in Times of Loss* by Holly Shaw; February-1999
- *Inclusion: Doing Our Best for All Children* by Susan Astor; November-1999
- *Becoming An Askable Parent* by Dona Cain; September-2000
- *Children's Fears: Where They Come From and How to Sooth Them* by Kelly Bulkeley; April-2001
- *Raising Children with Special Needs* by Nancy B. Miller; February-2002
- *When Children Grieve* by Kathi Morse; October-2002



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body, and every part of the body, is beautiful. But, although this is true, there are certain things about ourselves that we keep private."

The idea of public/private behavior is so vital because, "although we don't want our children to feel ashamed of their sexuality, we still want them to feel comfortable with our own family's values," says Kaufstein.

"Parents often think that sexuality begins with puberty. But during your children's early years, many things of a sexual nature are going on around them. Simple questions of modesty, nudity, privacy, love and sexual behavior are faced each and every day in some form or another. So remember that you, as a parent, must be ready to talk about all of these issues," continues Kaufstein.

Even if your children seem to understand what you have said, be prepared to revisit the topic sometime in the future. Many of these lessons need to be repeated a number of times until your child truly understands.

"Always remember that the main focus of these discussions is not only be to teach your children something about sexual behavior but also to build a relationship with them in which sexual questions can be accepted, explained, and discussed without judgement or embarrassment" concludes Kaufstein.

### When "Difference" Makes a Difference

We have all heard the stories. Children seeing a handicapped person in the shopping mall blurting out embarrassing questions or, worse case scenario, running away in fear.

Michelle Laser, ACSW, is a Psychiatric Social Worker, Director of the Partners in Education Program for North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, and the mother of two daughters, the eldest of whom has special needs both developmentally and medically. She offers the following advice "The first thing parents can do is to validate their children's reaction. Ask them what they are feeling and why. Parents can use these feelings as a springboard to discussion," says Laser.

"We can reassure our children that, although disabled people seem "different" on the outside, they are just like us on the inside. They have their own feelings, hopes, and dreams just as we do. Their hopes and dreams can be very different from ours because they are based on their own reality. But, we can help our children understand that differences might not be so important when we listen, look and find the real person inside," explains Laser.

Parents need to think about how they can explain disabilities to their child in age appropriate ways. Remember that very young children need very concrete

explanations. An example might be: "Janice rides in a wheelchair because her legs don't move the way your legs move. The wheelchair helps her to get around." Something simple and very straightforward is fine. Parental explanations can become more detailed and sophisticated as a child gets older.

"As we talk to our children, we can be prepared to witness a change in their attitude," says Laser. "Empathy and insight can grow as they face and understand their fears and concerns. As they think about their reactions and feelings they will exhibit less prejudice, fewer stereotypes, and become more helpful, compassionate, and kind," says Laser. All of these reactions reflect the developing respect our children will have for human diversity. "We can lead our children by example. We can talk about how grateful we are for all that we have; how remarkable and strong a disabled person must be to face such tremendous challenges every day. We can talk about how, what appears to be a tragedy, can be vanquished and turned into a wonderful learning experience bringing accomplishment and great fulfillment," concludes Laser.

### Death, Dying and What About the Universe?

When children experience death, either through the death of a pet or the loss of a friend or family member, BIG questions can be raised. "Preschool children think about these things, but their feelings are the most important elements," says Reverend Doctor Barry Andrews, minister of religious education at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock on Long Island. "The children are going to feel sad and what they need first are hugs and sitting on the parent's lap being comforted. A parent or care-giver can

then talk about love and loss and why we feel sad."

Andrews suggests explaining death within the context of what happens in nature. "There is a life cycle all around us. You can point out the natural cycles all around them. Trees grow leaves, and then lose those leaves. Flowers grow in spring, and die in the winter. We're all part of that life cycle. People age, pets age, and also die" says Andrews. "But that's not quite the end. We go on loving them. The love we feel for those who have been a part of our lives endures."

We don't have to have all the answers, sometimes it's enough to be able to honor the question with our thoughtful attention. "When children ask these questions," says Andrews, "it's because they are already thinking about it themselves. Ask your youngsters for their thoughts. Listen to what they have to say. If your children's ideas are different from those you hold, don't tell them they're wrong, but you can mention that our thoughts on the subject do sometimes change."

Finally, remember that there are many, wonderful books to help parent and child sit down and explore their feelings and begin to cope with these difficult situations.

### So Where Does That Leave Us?

The best thing that we, as parents, can do for our kids is to be there for them. Be ready to talk, be open, and always know that everyone makes mistakes. If you say or do something that, upon reflection, you regret, go back and fix it in another talk with your child. All we can do is our very best, and that is truly good enough. When kids know that their parents are sincere and are really trying, that's the best answer to every question.

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*Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour is a freelance writer and a marketing and public relations specialist. She is the Public Information Officer at North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center. Married, with one daughter, Ms. Meckwood-Yazdpour lives on Long Island, New York.*

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### *I Wanted to Take Away Her Tears*

*I watched her little face as she carried that goldfish out into the back yard and buried it.*
*I saw her cry when some kids made fun of her little, blind girlfriend.*
*I saw the questions pop right into her face as she looked at the pregnant lady in the grocery store.*
*I held that face in my hands and gently turned her head away so she would not see the car accident that rainy morning.*
*So many times I wanted to take the world away...*
*To wrap her in silk and never let anything hard touch her...*
*But of course I couldn't.*
*How could I?*
*I just had to trust her to ask the questions and find the answers in her own way.*
*And I tried to help, but that road was not always paved.*

*Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour*

## When Children See Trauma

It could be an earthquake, tornado, serious traffic accident, or even a national tragedy such as that of 9/11. Parents can prepare for helping their children cope with traumatic events. North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center offers the following suggestions to parents in handling these kinds of tragic public events:

- **Reassure your child immediately**. Tell him that his immediate family is safe and go over where each person is and what they are doing in order to be sure he understands that everyone is all right.
- **Continue with your regular daily schedule** as much as is possible. Keeping the day "normal" will provide children with a sense of structure and security.
- **Let your child know that the people in charge are all working to be sure that we are all safe.** Remind your child that *you* are also there and that you will protect him.
- **It is all right to let your children see that you are feeling angry, upset, or sad, but make is very clear that you are not upset with *them***, and try to keep yourself quiet and reassuring when communicating with your children.
- Children may show signs of distress. They may be clingy, fussy, very fearful, or exhibit sleep problems. **Parents should expect these normal reactions** and be ready to deal with them with understanding and patience.
- If you feel your child is very anxious and distressed, **limit their access to media coverage of the tragedy**.
- **Get support for yourself**. Find someone to talk to about your feelings. Getting this help for yourself is critical so that you will be able to help your children cope.
- **You can expect many reactions from children** in response to traumatic events. Some of these reactions might be:
  - Refusal to go to school or child care and withdrawal from friends and family
  - Fears related to the event such as the sound of airplanes or sirens
  - Sleep disturbances which could include nightmares and bed wetting
  - Misconduct and disobedience related to the traumatic event
  - Stomach aches, fevers, headaches, dizziness, and other physical symptoms, for which no immediate cause is obvious
  - Loss of concentration, irritability, regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking
  - Constant thoughts of the traumatic event and even the belief that another will occur

Further information on many different subjects having to do with children's emotional health can be found by contacting your local department of mental health or your local medical society.

# Kids and the Arts

I really didn't learn to see until I took my first drawing class. Of course, I had been able to navigate through my world without crashing into objects, but I hadn't learned to really see what was in front of me. It wasn't until I tried to recreate it that I realized how little I really noticed.

It's not just painting and drawing, it's also music and dance and all of the creative arts. They help us see, hear, understand, and learn.

Drawing and coloring teaches how to see colors, shapes, lines and perspective. Objects far away are smaller. When we move, things look different. Noticing what goes on around us is also the first step in understanding science. First, you see something, then you ask a question. Why is the sky blue? What causes the colors in a rainbow? Why do trees lose their leaves?

Music and singing teaches us to hear. Are the notes ascending or descending? What makes a pleasing sound or sound combination? What are the sounds of nature? The rustle of leaves, the patter of rain, the songs of the birds.

Producing any creation is also a learning and decision-making process. What do you want to do? What materials do you need? How do you start? Do you like what you've created? We become a critic and evaluate our work. What do you want to change?

In a world in which we're always asking children to verbally process information – listen to what the teacher is saying, read the words and see the small differences between words and letters – art not only exercises different parts of the brain, it provides a complementary way for children to learn.

* Here are some ways you can bring the arts into your preschooler's life.

* Bring music and rhythm into their world. Shake a rattle along with baby, perhaps in time to music. Play with language through song lyrics and rhymes. Sing.

* Play imitation games using sounds, words, and movements. Take turns being the leader.

* Make and play simple musical instruments. Or, simply play the table top with wooden spoons. Set up an array of objects that make different sounds. Now, improvise. Change the beat. Add notes.

* Put works of art around the house. It doesn't have to be framed originals, or even prints. Works of art are in calendars, magazines, and children's books. Talk about what you see, what you like and what you don't like. Pretend to be the artist...what would you do differently?

* Do silly things with your voice. Make it go higher and lower. Change the key in a musical selection. Add harmony.

* Play with water colors and paints. Instead of buying green, make it from yellow and blue. How does changing the amount of the different colors change the outcome?

* Put on music and move around the room. Pretend to be different animals dancing. How

» » » *Continued pg. 6.*

# Dear Reader ...

As parents we eventually learn to handle the little questions. We explain why there's those yucky vegetables again. Why it's not possible to wear a bathing suit to preschool when it's snowing. But eventually we face the BIG questions. And that can stop us in our verbal tracks as we think "ohmygosh!" This month Jane Meckwood-Yazdpour has written an article to help parents face those tough moments. There are more BIG questions than we have room to include in one article, so feel free to send us the BIG questions your little ones have asked and we'll do another issue later, on more BIG questions.

We've often talked about the fact that mistakes happen, and how it's important to learn from them and move on. We've had the opportunity to put that philosophy into action with last month's newsletter. You may have noticed that it went out without a signature for this very column. We apologize for any confusion it might have caused. It was still my column. This month we've made sure that signature is there at the bottom.

In this issue you'll find information on the importance of the arts in children's lives and craft activities by Dawn Barhyte. Our Library Resources section includes books to help with big and little questions. Finally, we have information on new developments in the controversy over soft vinyl children's toys.

As always, we love to hear from you. Email us at PandP@NorthShoreChildGuidance.org

Heide Schwartzberg

» » *Continued from Pg. 5.*
would a cat move? An elephant? A rabbit? Take a scarf and use it as a prop when you dance. Express moods through music and movement. What does happy sound like? What does happy look like?

* Write poetry and rhymes with your child. Use words to create visual images.

* When your child is old enough, play with nontoxic clay. Squish it through your fingers. Mold it into interesting shapes.

* Make up stories and illustrate them. Start with events and experiences familiar to your child. Then, vary them. What if... people celebrated Mondays instead of birthdays. What if your pet was a penguin. Illustrate other people's stories.

*Sing. Play. Dance. Move. Enjoy!*

**For more information on the arts and young children contact Americans for the Arts, 1000 Vermont Ave, NW; Washington, DC 20005; 202-371-2830. Also, Young Children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections, The Task Force on Children's Learning and the Arts: Birth to Age Eight and Sara Goldhawk, Arts Education Partnership. available through http://www.americansforthearts.org**

• For more ideas see *P&pN*'s "Craft Corner" in this issue, and appearing regularly throughout the year.

***Neala S. Schwartzberg, Ph.D.*** is editor of *Parent & preschooler Newsletter* and a lover of all of the arts.

## The Continued Controversy Over Soft Vinyl Toys

Those soft vinyl teethers your infant happily chews, and the soft vinyl toys your youngster loves to mouth are again the focus of earnest debate.

Phthalates (pronounced thal-ates) are chemicals used in polyvinyl chloride (PVC) children's products to make them softer and more pliable. The problem is that phthalates, an acknowledged carcinogen in laboratory animals damaging the liver, kidney, and other organs, are not tightly bound to the chemical structure and can leech out of toys and into babies. Scientists call this migration.

No one wants babies to end up eating cancer-causing chemicals. The government launched research studies to determine whether children were truly at risk. Many, although not all, manufacturers of children's toys and teethers voluntarily switched to other compositions. Further the National Environmental Trust and eleven other organizations requested the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to ban the use of PVC in all toys and products intended for children five years of age and under.

Just this past February (2003) the CPSC announced its ruling, denying the petition. The statement of one of the members, a commissioner of the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Honorable Thomas H. Moore, explained that "The clear weight of the evidence produced by staff supports the conclusion that children are not at risk from mouthing products currently on the market that contain diisononyl phthalate (DINP)."

However, the controversy has not been quieted. Greenpeace points out that the European Union (EU) has had a ban in place since December 8, 1999. One of their concerns is that the failure of the CPSC to ban these products may encourage manufacturers who currently do not use phthalates to return to using them in their products.

Indeed, Thomas Moore wrote "I am concerned, however, that the staff's conclusions could be the basis for industry to use phthalates in products that they have voluntarily agreed not to use them in, namely rattles, teethers and pacifiers." He noted that this is the one area in which they do not have concrete information or DINP from these three products.

The other concern is that no one knows the level of exposure of children in real, daily life. Or how much the chemicals actually "migrate" into children. No one know how much phthalates very young children are exposed to from other sources.

Clearly, parents now face a dilemma. On the one hand we are assured that not enough of the chemicals can leech out to cause harm to children. On the other hand, how reassured could we be by such a tepid statement?

Each and every parent, of course, makes personal decisions about what's safe for their youngsters. But, it would seem that caution would be an appropriate path. Many companies have voluntarily removed PVC, but there are certainly other companies selling phthalate-laden toys. It's hard to know which toys are phthalate-free, only a few companies label their products either PVC-free or phthalate-free. "Toys that are labeled 'vinyl' or 'soft, washable vinyl' or similar phrases contain PVC," says Lisa Finaldi, a spokesperson for Greenpeace. "The only way to be sure your child's toys are safe is to ask the manufacturer or use our report card."

Finally, although Greenpeace believes that removing PVC from baby products that children are likely to mouth or teethe "is a good first step," they call for PVC to be removed from all children's products. "Generally, children up to age three chew on everything they can get their hands on, not just teething toys, and even older children are vulnerable to phthalate exposure."

**➢ For more information on the controversy visit the Consumer Products Safety Commission website at: http://www.cpsc.org and Greenpeace at: http://www.greenpeaceusa.org.**

# Kids Crafts

Swing into spring and get your children's creative spirit in gear by introducing them to these fun and fanciful hands-on projects. Kids love to create so why not treat them to a crafting adventure? As kids experiment they will stretch their skills and imagination.

If we respond enthusiastically to children's creative pursuits and celebrate their artistic side we promote their creativity and individuality and encourage them to take risks as they explore new ground. Keep in mind children learn best when they are having fun, so let fun reign as your child captures the beauty of spring.

***Cuddly Caterpillar***
You will need: Assorted pom poms (can be found in craft stores); Googly eyes (can be found in craft stores); Wooden clothespin; Craft glue. Have your child spread some spring cheer by making these delightful critters. First ask your child to "feel" the pom poms and identify the texture. Then invite him to imagine a caterpillar and ask him to describe what it looks like. Finally have your child glue the pom poms onto the clothespin and then the eyes. They're a charming way to brighten anyone's day, so encourage your child to make more than one and give them as tokens of affection to friends and family.

***Fanciful Footwork Butterflies***
You will need: Large white paper (butcher paper is a good choice); Tempera paint in assorted colors; Large brush; Magic Markers. First tickle your child's feet with the brush to get her accustomed to the feeling. Then, paint one foot at a time and have her print her feet onto the paper so the prints are side by side but angled slightly to create butterfly wings. Allow time to dry, then invite her to embellish her creations by adding dots of paint as well as details like the antennae to complete the butterflies. Ask her to imagine the colorful wings and encourage her to use paint and markers to jazz up the creation with interesting patterns and designs. Talk about how caterpillars make the metamorphosis to butterflies. Expand upon this craft by reading *The Hungry Caterpillar*, a classic, as well as other fiction and nonfiction books about butterflies.

***Rainbow Toast***
You will need: White bread; Assorted Food Coloring; Milk; Unused clean brushes; Small paper cups. Rainbows are magical to children and this tasty treat will entice your child to think about colors in a hands-on way. First discuss rainbows and when they might appear. See if your child can imagine the colors that make up a rainbow. Then fill each paper cup half way up with milk. Invite your child to carefully add several drops of food coloring corresponding colors of the rainbow. Prompt your child to paint the bread with a rainbow of color. Encourage them to be whimsical and make more than one. As you lightly toast the bread the heat will cause the colors to become deep and vibrant. It's so interesting to watch your children will want to make more than one.

Spring Handprint Wreath
You will need: Several sheets of pastel colored construction paper; Scissors; Piece of oak tag; Pencil; Large circular item to use as a stencil; Smaller circular form to use as a stencil; Glue; Ribbon or yarn.

This simple, but delightful craft will be a cheerful addition to your front door or wherever you'd like a burst of color. Begin by tracing the circles onto the cardboard. The larger one first then the smaller item inside leaving plenty of open space. Your children may need assistance for this step. This will become the base for your children's handiwork. Then, have your children trace their hands on the colored construction paper so you end up with at least nine handprints, three of each color. Next, the handprints need to be cut. Use child-safe scissors to carefully cut out the prints. Have your children glue the handprints to form a design of their choice. Make a small hole in the center of the wreath and run a ribbon through to display. Hang their handiwork and enjoy.

***Signs Of Spring Extravaganza***
You will need: Large white paper (finger paint paper or butcher paper if possible); Green, red, pink, yellow finger-paint; Assorted magic markers.

This burst of color is sure to put a smile on your children's face as they see the flower take shape. First have your child place their hand in the finger-paint color of choice excluding their thumbs. Then prompt them to make a print pressing firmly, forming the head of a flower. Encourage them to make several and talk about tulips and other spring flowers. Think of other signs of spring like bumblebees, birds, and butterflies. Using their thumb, dipped into a different color have them print these embellishments. Use the markers to add details to their critters. Leave lots of room for other creative touches of spring.

Happy Crafting and Happy Springtime!

*Dawn Marie Barbyte*

# Library Resources

## Books for Tough Times and Difficult Questions

📖 ***In the Piney Woods*** by Roni Schotter; pictures by Kimberly Bulcken Root; Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Melanie Kroupa Books); New York; 2003; Hardcover $16.00. There is a cycle of life found in the woods with trees growing and providing the seeds necessary for the next generation. Eventually the old trees die. A little girl and her grandfather explore the woods and she learns the lessons that help her when her beloved grandfather dies.

📖 ***Moses Goes to the Circus*** by Isaac Millman; Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Frances Foster Books); New York; 2003; Hardcover $16.00. Moses is deaf but that doesn't stop him and his family from enjoying their day at the circus. Moses uses the signs of American Sign Language, which is reproduced in the book as a wonderful introduction to signing.

📖 ***My Name is Yoon*** by Helen Recorvits; pictures by Gabi Swiatkowska; Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Frances Foster Books); New York; 2003; Hardcover $16.00. A little girl named Yoon comes with her family from Korea. She feels lonely and out of place, and not very happy to be learning English. She refuses to write her name. But with the support of her family and a patient teacher Yoon begins to adjust to her new home.

📖 ***The Rainbow Tulip*** by Pat Mora; illustrated by Elizabeth Sayles; Viking; New York; 1999; Hardcover $15.99. At home with her family from Mexico, she's Estelita. At school she's Stella trying to cope with living in two different cultures. When the girls in the class dress as tulips for the May celebration, she decides to be a rainbow of color. She's proud of being different, but a bit frightened, too.

📖 ***Raising Yoder's Barn*** by Jane Yolen; paintings by Bernie Fuchs; Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 1998; Hardcover $15.95. Although they live in the middle of one of the world's most technologically advanced societies, the life of the Amish is as it was almost 100 years ago. Many are farmers and when a fire destroys the barn of one family all the families join in to build a new one.

📖 ***The Real, True Dulcie Campbell*** by Cynthia DeFelice; pictures by R. W. Alley; pictures by R. W. Alley; Farrar, Straus and Giroux; New York; 2002; Hardcover $16.00. "One Saturday afternoon, when Dulcie Campbell was doing her chores, it occurred to her that a terrible mistake had been made on the day she was born." Dulcie lives on a farm but she's convinced that she's really Princess Dulcinea. She fantasizes about how her real parents would treat her and what her real life would be like. But the life of a princess seems boring and lonely. And then, there are all the monsters and trolls. So, the Princess decides being Dulcie is just fine.

📖 ***Wanda's Monster*** by Eileen Spinelli; illustrated by Nancy Hayashi; Albert Whitman & Company, Morton Grove, IL; 2002; Hardcover $15.95. Like many children, Wanda is afraid of monsters, especially the one that lives in her closet. Failure of her parents to see the monster doesn't ease her concern. Granny believes there could be monsters, but she feels sorry for them. They live in cold dark closets and basements because they are shy and afraid. Wanda's solution is to stuff her closet with pillows, toys and other comfy objects. A charming book with a unique approach to handling children's fears of monsters.

## Books for Parents

📖 ***Everything You NEVER Wanted Your Kids to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid They'd Ask)*** by Justin Richardson, M.D., and Mark A. Schuster, M.D., Ph.D.; Crown Publishers; New York; 2003. Subtitled *The Secrets to Surviving Your Child's Sexual Development From Birth to the Teens*, this book will hold your hand through all the stages. It's warm, funny, and very reassuring. The authors are not afraid to tackle topics parents would rather not face, although we know we will.

📖 ***Conception, Pregnancy & Birth*** by Dr. Miriam Stoppard; Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc.; London; 2000; Hardcover $29.95. A well laid out, focused, and practical book chocked with information, tips, hints, and support. In fact, too much for us to summarize. If you've wondered about it, it's probably covered in this comprehensive book. The help continues after baby is born. And there's a real effort to include fathers.


CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
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NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

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# Contestando Las GRANDES Preguntas de la Vida

Allison, una niña de cinco años llegó a la casa de su kindergarten sumamente entusiasmada sobre la llegada de una nueva niña a su clase. De repente se puso muy seria y abruptamente cambió el tema a uno que completamente sorprendió a su madre. ¿"De donde vengo"? preguntó con mucha seriedad. Pero su mamá estaba completamente sorprendida que LA GRAN pregunta haya surgido cuando su hija todavía era tan joven. Pero ella se había prometido que cuando tuviese hijos, ella iba a estar lista con la respuesta –no como sus propios padres que habían titubeado dándole respuestas equívocas hasta un momento en que las respuestas ya no eran pertinentes. Por lo tanto, sacó todos los libros e ilustraciones y sentó a Allison en su falda, y se pasó casi una hora explicando la reproducción de una manera delicada y apropiada a su edad. Al terminar, y sintiéndose muy orgullosa e inspirada le preguntó a Allison si tenía preguntas. Mirando a su mamá Allison dijo, "Bueno, mi amiga Gina dijo que ella era de Chicago así que yo solamente quería saber de donde era yo".

• Las imágenes estaban en todas partes. No importaba cuanto lo intentaran, Eva y José no podían evitar que su hijo Miguel de tres años, viera las imágenes de la horrible tragedia, repetirse constantemente. Más tarde empezaron las pesadillas, seguidas por el paulatino distanciamiento de Miguel de sus actividades cotidianas. Eva y José simplemente no sabían cómo ayudar a su hijo. Incluso temían tocar el tema con él porque simplemente no tenían las respuestas.

• Al caminar por la calle con su pequeño hijo Alex, Serafina estaba avergonzada por la muchas fotos de mujeres desnudas o semidesnudas que aparecían en tantos periódicos o tapas de revistas cuando pasaban al frente del kiosco de revistas. Alex miraba y Serafina trataba de distraerlo, preguntándole cosas sobre su curso preescolar y sobre sus amigos y profesores. Pensó que él se había olvidado de esas imágenes hasta que se apareció después de la cena en el comedor completamente desnudo. Serafina y el padre de Alex, David, estaban perturbados. Rápidamente llevaron a Alex a su cuarto y lo vistieron, mientras Alex parecía desconcertado por la evidente incomodidad de sus padres. Simplemente no podía entender por qué tenía que ponerse ropa. Las personas en las fotos no lo hacían. Serafina y David estaban igualmente desconcertados, –pero por distintas razones;– ¿Cómo podían conversar con él sobre eso? ¿Que podían decir? ¿Cómo se habla de la sexualidad con un niño de tres años?

• Alicia fue al jardín infantil una mañana y se encontró con una niña que usaba muletas para caminar y que pronunciaba las palabras indistintamente. La pequeña niña tenía un aspecto "distinto" y actuaba "diferente" a los otros niños. Alicia se sentía incomoda e inquieta. Decidió que no quería ir más al jardín. Después de muchas preguntas, Alicia describió sus sentimientos sobre esta niña nueva. Su padre y madre estaban asombrados. Simplemente no estaban preparados para hablarle a su hija sobre niños y adultos discapacitados con "necesidades especiales". No tenían el lenguaje o los esquemas.

• La cata de Eduardo murió. Él estaba triste y retraído y no comprendía como esto podía haber ocurrido. Su padre buscaba palabras para

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explicarle y consolarlo.

Estos son unos pocos casos hipotéticos sobre las GRANDES preguntas que todos los padres tienen que enfrentar tarde o temprano. Cómo contestamos estas preguntas es muy importante en cómo los niños perciben su mundo. ¿El mundo es algo que puede ser comprendido? ¿Existen pautas de conducta para hacer las cosas más fáciles? ¿Puede un niño sentir que tiene control sobre cualquier situación? ¿Qué es aceptable y qué no lo es? Un padre enfrenta todas estas preguntas a medida que su hijo crece y funciona en su entorno.

## ¿Por Donde Empezamos?

Hay algunas preguntas que podemos anticipar y la primera y más importante cosa que pueden hacer los padres es estar preparados. Piense sobre su mundo, -las cosas que puede enfrentar durante el día-, y prepárese con respuestas sencillas, auténticas, y apropiadas a la edad.

Recuerde que los temas "sensibles" pueden hacerlo sentirse incómodo así que estar preparado para las preguntas lo ayudará a sentirse menos incomodo y más en control de la situación. Incluso una breve frase inicial es útil. Solo recuerde que tiene que hacer sus tareas de antemano lo más posible. Si no está seguro de la respuesta, -haga un poco de investigación por su cuenta antes de que surja el tema.

Marcelo, el hijo de Liliana, una vez le preguntó por qué no podía tener una honda cuando dos de sus amigos tenían una. Liliana sabía sobre las hondas de los amigos y, consecuentemente, estaba preparada para la conversación con Marcelo. Su primera frase fue: "...porque en nuestra familia no creemos en cosas que pueden lastimar a alguien". Esta fue una bonita manera de darle a su hijo un percepción de los valores de la familia como una razón real para no poseer una honda. Esta primera frase inició una discusión que complació a Marcelo.

## Comprenda la Pregunta

Es importante que los padres sepan exactamente en qué onda están sus hijos. Igual que Allison y su mamá, antes que empezará la discusión, hubiese sido útil que la mamá le hubiese hecho una pregunta directa. Allison dijo ¿"De donde vengo"? Su madre pudo haber preguntado, ¿"Por qué preguntas"? O pudo haber dicho "Por qué no me cuentas lo que ya sabes sobre el tema". Esto hubiera cambiado la situación a algo muy distinto. La GRAN pregunta no se había planteado. Allison no estaba lista para hacer esa pregunta. De hecho, seguramente ni siquiera había pensado sobre esa pregunta en su vida.

## No Crea que Tiene que Estar Preparado Para Todo

Cuando nos enfrentamos a una de esas GRANDES preguntas y nos sentimos poco preparados, es perfectamente apropiado decirle a nuestro hijo que tenemos que pensarlo antes de poder responder. Podemos explicar que es una pregunta muy importante y una que queremos responder de la mejor manera y, por lo tanto, queremos de acordar una hora para poder conversar sobre ella. Entonces, piénselo bien y determinen un momento en que ambos puedan estar juntos. Asegúrese de concretar esos planes y júntese con su hija en un lugar cómodo y privado.

## Temas y Preguntas Sexuales

A veces nos sentimos abrumamos por todas las cosas a las que están expuestos nuestros hijos y que no podemos controlar. Y a veces nos hacen preguntas que nos dejan averiguando una respuesta. Lo que es importante que los padres recuerden sobre todas las preguntas de una índole sexual es que sus valores y creencias son validos pero que los padres nunca deben discutir conducta sexual de una manera que haga a los niños sentir que han hecho algo malo.

Frecuentemente los niños muy pequeños encuentran agradable estar desnudos y cuando ven la desnudez a su alrededor en un lugar público pueden llegar a la conclusión que es una conducta pública aceptable.

"Es importante que los padres ayuden a sus hijos a encontrar una imagen corporal positiva", dice Bruce Kaufstein, ACSW, Asistente Social Psiquiátrico, Coordinador Clínico de North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, y padre de dos hijos. "Reforzar la idea que el cuerpo, y todas las partes del cuerpo, son bellas. Pero aun cuando esto es verdad, hay ciertas cosas sobre nosotros que mantenemos privado".

La idea de lo privado/publico es tan importante porque, "aun cuando no queremos que nuestros niños estén avergonzados de su sexualidad, queremos que se sientan cómodos con los valores de su propia familia", dice Kaufstein.

"Los padres frecuentemente piensan que la sexualidad empieza con la pubertad. Pero durante los primeros años, muchas cosas de una naturaleza sexual están sucediendo a su alrededor. Preguntas sencillas sobre pudor, desnudez, privacidad, amor y conducta sexual son enfrentadas todos los días de una manera u otra. Así que recuerde que Ud., como padre, tiene que estar listo para conversar sobre estos temas", dice Kaufstein.

Incluso si sus niños parecen comprender lo que has dicho, esté preparada para reabordar el tema en algún momento del futuro. Muchas de estas lecciones tienen que ser repetidas varias veces hasta que su hijo realmente comprenda.

"Siempre recuerde que el foco principal de estas conversaciones no es solamente enseñarle algo a sus niños sobre conducta sexual sino que también construir una relación con ellos en la que ellos sientan que las preguntas sexuales pueden ser aceptadas,

explicadas, y discutidas sin prejuicios o vergüenza" concluye Kaufstein.

## Cuando "Distinto" es Importante

Todos hemos escuchado los cuentos. Los niños ven una persona discapacitada en el centro comercial y hacen preguntas engorrosas o, en el peor de los casos, se arrancan aterrados.

Michelle Laser, ACSW, es una Trabajadora Social Siquiátrica, Directora de Partners in Education Program en el North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, madre de dos niñas, y la mayor requiere atención especial debido a problemas de desarrollo y médicos. Ella ofrece los siguientes consejos: "La primera cosa que pueden hacer los padres es aceptar la reacción de su hijos. Pregúnteles qué están sintiendo y por qué. Apenas su niño empiece a abrirse sobre sus sentimientos y temores, los padres pueden usar esto como un punto de partida para una discusión", dice Laser.

"Podemos asegurarles a nuestros niños que, aunque algunas personas discapacitadas parecen ser 'diferentes' por fuera, son exactamente iguales a nosotros por dentro. Tienen sentimientos, esperanzas y sueños igual que nosotros. Sus esperanzas y sueños pueden ser muy distintos a los nuestros porque están fundados en su propia realidad. Pero, podemos ayudar a nuestros niños a comprender que las diferencias no son tan importantes cuando nos damos el tiempo para mirar y encontrar a la persona real que está adentro", explica Laser.

Los padres deben pensar sobre como pueden explicar las discapacidades a sus hijos de una manera apropiada a la edad. Recuerde que los niños muy pequeños necesitan explicaciones concretas. Un ejemplo puede ser: "Juanita anda en silla de ruedas porque sus piernas no se mueven de la manera en que se mueven las tuyas, así que la silla de ruedas la ayuda a movilizarse". Algo sencillo y muy directo será frecuentemente suficiente. Más adelante, los padres pueden dar explicaciones más detalladas y complejas a medida que los niños se desarrollan.

"A medida que conversamos con nuestro hijo, podemos estar preparados para ver un cambio en su actitud", dice Laser. "La empatía y el discernimiento puede aumentar a medida que afrontan sus temores y preocupaciones. Cuando empiezan a pensar sobre sus reacciones y sentimientos veremos, generalmente, que ellos expresan mucho menos prejuicios, menos estereotipos, y vemos como se transforman en más compasivos, serviciales, y bondadosos", dice Laser. Todas estas reacciones son simplemente el desarrollo del respeto que nuestros niños pueden tener por la diversidad humana. "Podemos guiar a nuestros niños con nuestro ejemplo. Podemos hablar sobre lo agradecidos que estamos por todo lo que tenemos; lo asombrosa y fuerte que debe ser una persona discapacitada para poder enfrentar todos esos increíbles desafíos todos los días; y como, lo que parece ser una tragedia, puede ser dominada y transformada en una maravillosa experiencia de aprendizaje que produce grandes logros y gran satisfacción", concluye Laser.

## La Muerte, Morir y el Universo También

Cuando los niños experimentan la muerte, ya sea a través de la muerte de una mascota o la perdida de un amigo o de un familiar, GRANDES preguntas pueden ser planteadas. "Los niños preescolares piensan sobre estas cosas, pero sus sentimientos son el elemento más importante", dice el Reverendo Doctor Barry Andrews, ministro de educación religiosa en la Unitarian Universalist Congregation en Shelter Rock en Long Island. "Los niños se van a sentir tristes y lo que primero necesitan son cariños y poder sentarse en la falda de sus padres y ser consolados. Después, un padre o un apoderado les puede hablar sobre el amor y la perdida, y como nos sentimos tristes".

Andrews sugiere explicar la muerte dentro del contexto de lo que pasa en la naturaleza. "Existe un ciclo de vida a nuestro alrededor. Se pueden señalar los ciclos de la naturaleza que los rodea por todas partes. Los árboles crecen hojas y después pierden esas mismas hojas. Las flores florecen en la primavera y mueren en el invierno. Todos somos parte de ese ciclo de la vida. La personas envejecen, las mascotas envejecen y también mueren". Pero eso no es realmente el fin. "Nosotros seguimos queriéndolos. Y el amor que sentimos por esos seres que han sido parte de nuestras vidas no desaparece".

No tenemos que tener todas las respuestas. A veces es suficiente poder dignificar la pregunta con nuestra cuidadosa atención. "Cuando los niños hacen estas preguntas", dice Andrews, "es porque las están pensando. Pregúntele a sus hijos sobre sus pensamientos. Escuche lo que dicen. Si las ideas de sus hijos son distintas a las que tu tienes, no les diga que están equivocados, pero si puedes indicar que nuestras ideas sobre el tema a veces cambian".

Finalmente, recuerde que hay libros maravillosos para niños para ayudar a padre e hijos a sentarse y explorar sus sentimientos y empezar a enfrentar estas situaciones difíciles.

## ¿Qué Significa Todo Esto?

Como padres lo mejor que podemos hacer para nuestros niños es estar cuando nos necesitan. Esté listo para conversar, ser abierto, y siempre sepa que todo el mundo comete errores. Si haces o dices algo sobre lo cual te arrepientes después de haberlo reflexionado, vuelve y soluciónalo en otra conversación con tu hijo. Lo único que podemos hacer es hacer las cosas lo mejor posible y eso es realmente suficiente. Cuando los niños saben que sus padres son

sinceros y están realmente esforzándose, esa es la mejor respuesta a cualquier pregunta.

***Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour es escritora independiente, especialista en relaciones públicas y marketing, y Gerente de Información Pública en el North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center. Casada y con una hija, la Sa. Meckwood-Yazdpour reside en Long Island, Nueva York.***

## *Cuando los Niños ven Trauma*

Podría ser un terremoto, un huracán, un serio accidente del tránsito, o incluso una tragedia nacional. Los padres pueden preparar a sus hijos a enfrentar hechos traumáticos. North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center ofreció las siguientes sugerencias para que los padres puedan manejar estos tipos de eventos públicos trágicos.

Tranquilice a su niño inmediatamente. Dígale que toda su familia está a salvo y cuéntele donde está cada persona y que están haciendo para asegurarse que comprende que todo el mundo está bien.

Continué con su horario normal dentro de lo posible. Mantener los días "normales" le dará a los niños una sensación de estructura y seguridad.

Dígale a su niña que la gente que está al mando están trabajando para asegurarse que todos estén seguros. Reacuérdele a su hija que tu también estás ahí y que la protegerás.

Es perfectamente adecuado que sus niños te vean indignado, alterado, o triste, pero deje bien en claro que no estás enojado con ellos, e intente mantenerse sereno y tranquilizador cuando se comunica con sus niños.

Los niños pueden demostrar síntomas de angustia. Pueden ponerse regalones, irritables, muy temerosos, o demostrar trastornos del sueño. Los padres deben esperar estas reacciones normales y estar listos para manejarlas con comprensión y paciencia. Quizás también sea aconsejable reducir el tiempo de mirar la cobertura de la tragedia por los medios de comunicación.

Consigue apoyo para ti. Encuentre a alguien con quien conversar sobre sus sentimientos. Obtener esta ayuda es absolutamente fundamental para que puedas ayudar a tus niños a enfrentar la tragedia.

Puedes esperar muchas reacciones de los niños como respuesta a eventos traumáticos. Algunas de estas reacciones pueden ser:

Negarse ir al colegio o al jardín y aislarse de los amigos y familiares.
Temores relacionados al evento tales como el ruido de aviones o sirenas.
Trastornos del sueño que pueden incluir pesadillas y hacerse pipí en la cama.
Mala conducta y desobediencia relacionada al acontecimiento traumático.
Dolores de estomago, fiebres, dolores de cabeza, mareos, y otros síntomas físicos, para los cuales no hay una causa aparente.
Falta de concentración, irritabilidad, conductas regresivas como chuparse el dedo.
Pensamientos constantes sobre el hecho traumático e incluso la creencia que ocurrirá otro.

Más información sobre trauma y desconsuelo puede encontrarse contactándose con su departamento local de salud mental o en su sociedad médica local.

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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

Pp Parent and preschooler

NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

*Multiple Year Winner of Parent's Choice Approval Award*

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# Single Parenting
## *Through the Divorce Process*

The separation and divorce process can be a gut-wrenching experience. While some former spouses report relief, for most the emotional landscape is predominantly colored by pain, regret, ambivalence and anger. Sometimes former partners become adversaries and end up on a lengthy and bumpy path through the legal system. More often than not both parties have stopped talking to each other.

Few couples, even if they are still talking, take the time to consider what the impact of divorce will be on their children. And, if they do, they draw a few conclusions such as: "This will hurt, but it will hurt more if we stay together;" "I can't live like this, if I'm happy the children will be happy too;" "They are my kids I know what's best for them."

Well-intentioned parents worry about, and often intuitively know, how their kids will fare, but they are often dismayed and caught off guard when the kids fare poorly and have problems. Even in the best cases, divorce creates disruption in the lives of children. Divorcing spouses can't put parenting on hold while they sort it all out. When the dust finally settles everyone is left to pick up the pieces of their lives.

Consequently, the already daunting job description of parent must be expanded to include "first line critical responder" and "trauma and bereavement specialist." This is especially tricky given the already emotionally fragile position in which many divorcing partners find themselves. Although the actual psychological costs to children continue to be debated, one thing is abundantly clear – damage control needs to begin immediately.

There's an old adage about families – that no two children in the same family have the same two parents. Each parent and child create their own unique relationship. So, it's also fair to say that no two children in the same family will experience their parents' divorce the same way.

### *Making Divorce Easier for Kids*

No one can predict with certainty the long term impact, but there are several factors which affect how a child reacts to parental divorce.

There is no good age for a child to be when parents divorce. Even grown children often feel sad and bereft if their parents separate. But age is a consideration in terms of a child's budding physical, intellectual and emotional needs and abilities.

If preschoolers are overlooked, neglected, or abandoned they may find it difficult to mobilize their resources and achieve the next developmental challenge. Separating from a parent long enough to go to school, mastering skills such as toilet-training, even learning how to play with other children may become difficult.

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The best-case scenario is an amicable, or at least civil, separation with only minor disruption in the child's daily routine.

Children's connection to their parents is their source of security. When the connection is frayed, when family life begins to erode, when a child has been frequently exposed to dramas "with adult content," watching crisis after crisis unfold in the family, it creates feelings of insecurity.

Problems are less likely when the relationship with parents has been close and supportive and when parents carefully and thoughtfully explain the impending divorce to their children.

Parents need to talk to their kids in simple, clear language, offering reassurance and comfort. Children need to know it's not their fault, and that their parents will continue to be there for them. Parents also need to take time to answer their children's questions. Children only gradually come to understand and accept the reality of the divorce. Their questions will be revisited, arising again and again over the coming days and weeks, and perhaps months.

Critical moments are often riddled with paradox, and the divorce process is no exception. When parents are at their emotionally weakest and most fragile they are required to be at their strongest and most resilient. Even in the midst of personal chaos adults need to provide sensitive parenting and a stable consistent environment. This means a parent must be sensitive and receptive to children's smallest overtures as well as grander dramatic gestures – both the gentle coos and the raging temper tantrums – and respond to them with respect and understanding.

Staying emotionally connected with your child throughout the divorce process is difficult. It takes considerable strength and true commitment to your child's well-being. It involves stretching beyond ruminations about past hurts and the desire to retaliate against your ex-partner to focus on what's best for your youngster.

Here are some points to consider in helping your child manage during the divorce process.

### *Know Your Children and Become Adept at Noticing Subtle Shifts in Their Personality.*

In the aftermath of divorce most kids will mourn the loss of their family. While young children do not have the affective language to describe their feelings, their behaviors will usually provide a clue to their inner experience. For instance, the happy gregarious child may become withdrawn, the placid baby may be quieter or even less demanding than usual.

A general rule of thumb is that during stressful times children often regress to the level of their last successful developmental challenge. The toilet-trained toddler may start wetting himself again, the independent

## *When Talking Makes Things Worse*

For some kids, the more they talk about their feelings concerning the breakup, the more upset they get. Occasionally parents may press a child to talk and find that the child becomes nearly hysterical. When children are routinely overanxious and obsessive about the divorce, talking about it may need to wait. What can you do for children in this situation? Acknowledge their intense feelings. Help them develop strategies to distract and calm themselves. When they start to feel overwhelmed by their emotions, children might read a favorite book, watch a funny TV show, play a game, or do some other activity that will ease stress and refocus their thoughts.

It's possible that some children won't be ready to discuss their feelings for a long time. Use your own instincts and knowledge of your child to decide when and how to encourage talking about feelings. If your daughter or son continues to have serious difficulties coping, consult a social worker, counselor, or specialist at school.

Source: *Speaking of Divorce: How to talk to your kids and help them cope*, by Roberta Beyer & Kent Winchester; Free Spirit Publishing Inc.; Minneapolis, MN; www.freespirit.com

## *Resource Information*

**Books**: These books differ in tone, some are informal and easy to read, others are more scholarly. Some have chapters on special topics. All present good, solid information.

- *Speaking of Divorce: How to talk to your kids and help them cope*, by Roberta Beyer & Kent Winchester; Free Spirit Publishing Inc.; Minneapolis, MN; www.freespirit.com
- *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered* by E. Mavis Hetherington, John Kelly; W.W. Norton & Company; February 2003
- *Helping Children Cope with Divorce* by Edward Teyber; Jossey-Bass Publishers; Paperback, 1996
- *Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce the Sandcastles Way* by M. Gary Neuman, Patricia Romanowski; Random House; 1999
- *Parenting After Divorce: A guide to resolving conflicts and meeting your children's needs* by Philip M. Stahl; Impact Publishers; Atascadero, CA; Paperback 2000

**Websites**:

- www.divorcemagazine.com - an online magazine with features, columns and more
- www.nolopress.com - a website specializing in books on legal information across a wide variety of topics including but not limited to divorce and separation.
- www.divorcecentral.com - divorce information website that also contains listing of divorce-related laws, state by state

preschooler may become anxious and clingy or start sucking her thumb. A formerly robust kindergartner may have somatic complaints like a stomachache or start balking at the idea of going to school.

If you can anticipate your children's reaction to change then you'll be far better equipped to calm their fears and anxieties and get them back on track again.

### *As Far As Possible Provide a Safe Haven for Your Children*

Most children thrive on routine. Try to maintain a predictable environment. This can mean something as simple as keeping the nightly story before bed, milk and cookies after pre-school or a regular game of Candy Land; but it also applies to limit-setting and discipline decisions. Structure is very reassuring and can provide at least a temporary defense against strong feelings and the emotional chaos.

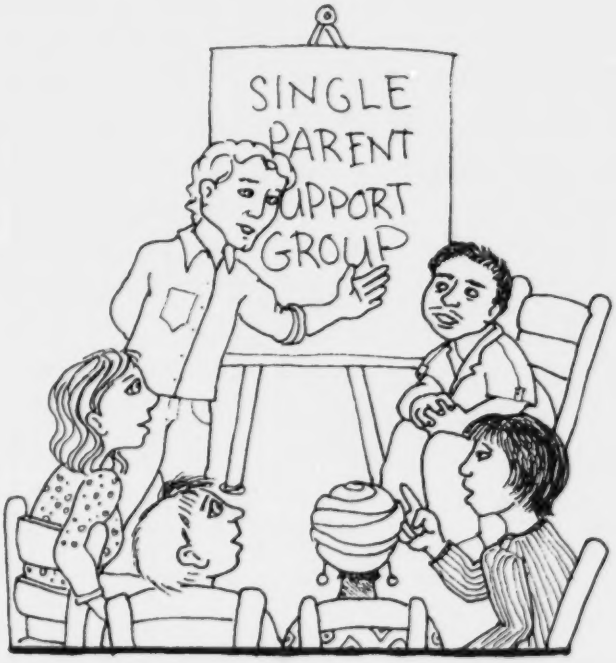
### *A Child's Sense of Security Must Also Be Considered in the Visitation Agreement*

Ideally, agreements should be flexible and reflect the developmental needs of the child. Often the child is ordered to spend time in both households. If the child is under the age of three and is being shuttled back and forth for overnight visitation, it can have a very unsettling effect. This distress may be exhibited in sleep disturbance, speech delays, or withdrawn behavior.

An unstable environment filled with changes – new schedules, new places to sleep – can delay achievement of new capacities such as the ability to be alone or to show concern for others.

### *Single Parenting Often Presents the Custodial Parent with Unexpected Challenges*

The most obvious one is that you're now on your own, parenting solo without any back-up.




This makes it critical to find new sources of support. Learn to ask for help from family and friends, or to contact local agencies that offer support groups or parenting classes. In other words, single parenting is a new frontier, learn to get help when needed.

### *Finally, Be Gentle With Yourself and Try To Keep Some Perspective*

*Divorce is extremely stressful.* It can throw you some unanticipated curveballs. Expect the unexpected and learn to take it in stride. A child's acting out behaviors aren't the end of the world. You can both learn from them if you are patient and take the time to understand how you and your children are feeling.

If you're depressed, irritable, or worn down don't let these feelings persist too long without seeking help. You need your emotional strength to raise your children.

Remember that you are also a role model for your children. Your behavior will send a message to them about how to deal with disappointment, how to resolve conflicts, and most importantly what family really means.

***Linda Reilly, CSW, is the Coordinator of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center's Single Parent Action Network (SPAN).***

## Co-parenting Shared Parenting

The current literature on divorce suggests that shared or co-parenting is the preferred arrangement. Studies show that children of divorce who have frequent, positive interactions with both parents do better later on in terms of being a well-adjusted adolescent and adult.

Although a joint custody arrangement would seem to set the stage for co-parenting actually sharing parenting is more complex. It is more than the routine visitation agreement that calls for Wednesday dinner and every other weekend with the other parent. Even in sole custody agreements shared parenting is possible and desirable. But shared parenting does mean redefining the parenting relationship. In its truest sense, parenting is proactive and preventative, both parents are equally involved.

### *Making Co-parenting Happen*

Successful co-parenting is possible when both parents can:

Put their child's needs first, setting aside personal anger and animosity and avoiding retaliatory gestures to

satisfy past hurts and humiliations. Instead, parents provide consistency and stability. Your relationship is now more like a business partnership where your ultimate goal is your child's well-being.

Agree to open lines of communication. Co-parents make a commitment to on-going discussions about their child's needs. Set aside time to discuss childcare issues in advance not just when emergencies occur. Just as a business sets goals a co-parenting agreement works to further a shared vision of your children from the simple details to the most future ideals, from toilet training to nurturing a generous and confident adult.

Share important information without criticizing. Keep each other informed about medical appointments, school outings and conferences, and the achievement of developmental milestones.

Keep to the agreements. Whether it's picking up the baby on time or not allowing her to watch TV while she is in your care, follow through with what you have agreed upon. If your original decisions no longer appear to be working, it's better to renegotiate the contract than to subvert it by giving your agreement to do it and then going your own way.

# Dear Reader ...

The dissolution of a relationship is never easy. When that relationship is a marriage and children are involved it becomes even more difficult. Linda Reilly, CSW runs the Single Parent Action Network at North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center and she has much wisdom to share in this month's feature. We've also found some thought-provoking research that you might find interesting.

For the past few years *Preschooler in the Kitchen* has been written by our friend and wonderful chef Sandy Allen. We've loved sharing her recipes and her stories of life in Brazil with you. But life moves on, and Sandy will be taking on new responsibilities in several areas of her life. This will be her last column for us. We'll miss you Sandy, and we wish you the best!

To all our readers, may your flowers grow, your children thrive, and the road rise up to meet you.

Heide Schwartzberg

# *Better Watch Out!!!*

It's May and time to be outside. But remember that, just as humans love to get outdoors during the soft days of spring, other species like to be out and about as well. Being exposed to insects may make our time outdoors less than perfect.

New York State Health Commissioner, Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H., is urging parents to protect their children: "*Stinging and biting insects are a particular nuisance during the spring and summer months, but we need to use insecticides and other pesticides with extreme care. Pesticides are inherently toxic and the State Health Department's Registry has received many reports of children who were rushed to hospitals after accidentally eating or coming into contact with pesticides.*"

Using pesticides to get rid of pests is a less than perfect solution because pesticides contain dangerous chemicals that could cause accidental poisoning or harm children in other ways if left within their reach. We can certainly prevent injuries to children from pesticide use if responsible adults take some simple precautions. The New York State Department of Health offers some guidelines:

- Always buy only the amount you will use at a single time. Try to avoid storing pesticides. If you must store pesticides, always store them in their original containers - do not transfer or mix pesticides in food or drink containers. Keep them in a locked cabinet in a well-ventilated area, away from the sight or reach of children, pets, and food - never store pesticides near family medicines or toiletries.
- Research and use non-chemical methods for controlling pests. Think about using traps or screens. Determine whether pesticides are actually needed; try using management methods such as beneficial predators or physical methods like hand-weeding, mulching, and clearing areas where insects may breed. And keep pests outdoors by blocking their way indoors through the use of clean, tight-fitting screens in good repair.
- If pesticides must be used, read and follow directions carefully.
- Use particular caution when applying insect repellents to children. For very young children and infants, you may wish to consult with your physician before using any repellents. Never allow children to apply repellents by themselves and never apply repellents to children's hands because this may result in ingestion or contact with the eyes, nose, or ears.

For more information contact:

- New York State Department of Health at www.health.state.ny.us
- Your Regional Poison Control Center
- National Pesticide Telecommunications Network: 1-800-858-7378
- New York State Department of Health's Environmental Health Infoline at: 1-800-458-1158
- Your local Health Department

# Research News

Research on divorce has gone far beyond the question of whether it's good or bad for children. The studies clearly answer: It depends. Recently, investigators have turned to look at other aspects of this complex process. Here are summaries of two studies.

The first explores the impact of father's negative behavior on children finding that living with Dad helps if he's a good role model but hurts if he isn't. The other study finds that the actions of ex-wives have a major impact on fathers' involvement with their children.

**➧ Benefits of Living with Father Depend on the Amount of Dad's Antisocial Behavior**

Children who live with highly antisocial fathers show an increase in behavioral problems the longer they live with their father, according to a new study and lead investigator Sara R. Jaffee, Ph.D., of King's College, London.

"Marriage may not be the answer to the problems faced by some children living in single-parent families unless their fathers can become reliable sources of emotional and economic support," says Jaffee.

Jaffee and colleagues analyzed data from 1,116 pairs of 5-year old twins in the United Kingdom, including information on the children's behavior problems, the antisocial behavior of their fathers and the amount of time that the fathers lived with and took care of the twins. Their results are published in the January/February issue of the journal *Child Development* and reported in the Health Behavior News Service press release (Center for the Advancement of Health).

The researchers also found that children had **more** behavior problems, like cheating, swearing, temper tantrums and physical attacks, when they spent **less** time living with fathers who had low levels of antisocial behavior.

If the father has low levels of antisocial behavior living with the father becomes a protective factor. In this case behavioral problems may increase among children who do not spend time living with their biological father.

This study was supported by the Medical Research Council and the Royal Society-Wolfson Research Merit Award.

**➧ Conflict with ex-wives can have a profound effect on reducing fathers' involvement in their children's lives.**

These researchers found that non-custodial fathers are less involved with their children when there's ongoing conflict with the children's mothers. In addition, lower involvement was connected to greater geographical distance from their children. A lack of clarity concerning the father's role after divorce also contributed to less involvement.

"I think we need to encourage more couples to use mediation during divorce and afterwards to help resolve some of the conflicts," said Patrick McKenry, professor of human development and family science at Ohio State University's College of Human Ecology. "That will help each parent feel that they're being treated fairly and reduce the chances of ongoing conflict."

McKenry co-authored the study with Randall W. Leite of Bowling Green State University. Their results were published in a recent issue of the *Journal of Family Issues*.

The issue is important because children whose fathers maintain strong involvement have a better sense of well-being, the researchers said. Also, involved fathers are also more likely to continue paying child support.

Fathers in general often get a bad rap after divorce, McKenry said. In addition society tends to assume that if a father cares about his children, he will maintain contact – but that assumption ignores how difficult it can be to maintain a relationship when fathers and children live apart, the researchers said.

To study the issue, the researchers examined data from the National Survey of Families and Households, finding that the level of parental conflict directly affected the amount of involvement fathers had with their children, and indirectly affected the level of satisfaction these men had in their roles as fathers. It appeared that the less decision-making ability the fathers had in relation to their children's lives, the more dissatisfied the fathers were.

"Our results suggest that conflict with a child's mother not only directly influences the father's involvement with the child but also is an important factor in the degree of satisfaction he experiences in his role as a father," McKenry said.

Part of the problem is that many men have no idea how to be fathers when their children live in another household, McKenry said. "I think it's clear we really haven't done a good job in preparing men for the father role," McKenry said. He would like to see more family life education geared to boys and men to help them learn more about parenthood. He also would like to see more elaborate parent education courses offered during and after divorce to help men learn how to parent on their own.



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# Preschooler in the Kitchen

## Take Along Foods

Spring is here! It's time to enjoy the outdoors. Explore the parks, visit the zoos, or whatever you and your family enjoy. I find that the best thing is to have picnics. Bring your preschooler, and her friends with you for an outing and eating.

Ask your child which kind of things he would like to do outside and proceed from there. Bring board games, trivia games, sports equipment, music, or just conversation. Ask each invitee bring something to share with each other such as beverages, a cold dish, sandwich, salad, fruits, and cookies. Preschoolers and adults will have a good time.

As for "take out food," I have two recipes – cheese roll, and ham log. Both are simple to make and delicious with crackers or a crusty country bread. They're also very good for inside parties too. Both spreads can be prepared up to 2 days before the party or the outing.

Prepare the Cheese Roll with any desired type of cheese, although cheddar works best. The Ham Log is prepared with cooked ham, or any good quality cold cut brand.

Time to bring your child to the kitchen, put your aprons on, wash your hands and let's start. Have a good time now!

### Cheese Roll

1-½ pounds mild Cheddar cheese, cut into pieces
½ pound cream cheese, at room temperature
1 small shallot, finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh dill, finely chopped
½ cup red radish, finely chopped
Black pepper to taste, if desired
Plastic foil to roll the cheese

• Adult: Cut the cheese into pieces, and set aside.
• Child: Unwrap the cream cheese, and set aside.
• Adult: Chop the shallot, the dill and radish and set aside.
• Child: Place the cheddar, cream cheese, and the chopped shallot in the jar of a food processor or blender, or hand grate and blend.
• Adult: Process the mixture until smooth. Place the mixture in a bowl.
• Child: Add the dill, radish, and a little pepper. Mix with a wooden spoon. If this is too hard to mix ask the adult to help you mix it.
• Adult: Cut a 18 by 12 inch wide piece of plastic wrap, and spread on a flat surface.
• Child: Scoop out the cheese mixture onto the plastic wrap.
• Adult: Show the child how to roll enclosing the mixture in the wrap making it resemble a cylinder. Wrap with aluminum foil. Refrigerate overnight, or up to 2 days before serving.

To Serve: Cut into rounds and place over the crackers, or spread on a slice of crusty bread.
Makes about 6 servings.

### Ham Log

2 pounds cooked ham
½ cup mayonnaise, (it can be low-fat)
2 tablespoons mustard
2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
½ cup water cress, chopped
1 cup golden raisins
½ cup walnuts, or any other nut, chopped (make sure that no one has allergy to nuts).
Plastic wrap
Aluminum foil

• Adult: Cut the ham into small pieces, set aside. Chop the parsley, and the water cress, and set aside.
• Child: Measure the mayonnaise, mustard, chopped herbs, raisins and the nuts, and set them aside.
• Adult: Place the ham, mayonnaise and mustard in a food processor or blender. Process ingredients until paste-like. You can also hand grate and blend.
• Child: Scoop the processed ingredients into a bowl. Add the water cress, raisins and the nuts. Mix well.
• Adult: Open the plastic wrap on a flat surface.
• Child: Scoop the ham mixture onto the plastic wrap. Wrap the ham by rolling it into a cylinder shape. Wrap with the foil. Can refrigerate up to 2 days before serving.

To serve cut into rounds and serve with crackers, or vegetables, or a crusty country bread.
About 8 to 10 servings.

Enjoy your picnics and enjoy a wonderful springtime!

*Sandra Allen*

## Think ... *Parent & preschooler Newsletter*

**MOVING??** Well, we don't want you to miss even one issue. So, if you have moved or will be moving soon, please send us your old address and your new address along with the effective date of your move. Send this information to: *P&pN*; North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; Subscriptions Dept.; 480 Old Westbury Road; Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215. And, don't forget to notify your old and new post offices as well.

**SOMEONE EXPECTING A BABY??** Consider sending them a gift subscription to *Parent & preschooler* - just send us their name and address along with your check for $32 payable to NSC&FGC. We will send them a gift notification in your name.

# THE PET STOP

"Elvis is in the Building!" That's the cry heard at the Guidance Center where I work when Elvis, the Basset Hound, visits our agency. Elvis is a certified therapy dog and kids and adults interacting with Elvis appreciate the old adage, "laughter is the best medicine." This nine year old, droopy eyed, long eared, big pawed creature looks more like a cartoon than a real dog. It is hard for people, even people who are fearful of dogs, to be intimidated by this very short, crooked legged pooch who prefers receiving belly rubs to almost anything other than yummy snacks.

I'm known around the center as "Elvis' Mom" and I adopted Elvis when he was almost eight years old. Together, we've done a lot of obedience training so that his typical "Basset stubbornness" behaviors have moderated enough so that he achieved his American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizenship certificate. He is also a certified therapy dog with Bide-A-Wee on Long Island, NY and he's also certified with the Delta Society, an international therapy dog organization. So my Elvis, has a lot of credentials along with his lovely personality.

His "work" at the Guidance Center is expanding as his reputation grows. He works with troubled kids and their families and they all seem to enjoy his happy presence as the atmosphere in the room often goes from anxiety and fear to trust and relaxation. And good things often happen when Elvis joins the therapy group.

Therapists from all parts of the Center have been requesting that Elvis join their sessions with kids and parents. He was very well received by a group of kids and their moms who are part of Project Liberty working with families who were victims of 9/11. As the kids excitedly played hide and seek games with Elvis, I asked them how they felt having Elvis there. As in one voice, they cried out, "Happy!" What more is there to say? I always accompany Elvis wherever he goes because we are "Pet Partners" after all. Elvis and other animals used in animal assisted therapy work can be effective healers in all sorts of ways.

For more information on learning about therapy dogs, check out HYPERLINK **http://www.deltasociety.com**

*Sandra Whiteside, ACSW*

Elvis, the therapy dog and his "Pet Partner," Sandra Whiteside, ACSW, Coordinator of the Turnabout Program at North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center on Long Island, NY.

## National Pet Week ...

**May 6 to 12th** is National Pet Week. If you have a pet or know someone who has a pet, then it's time to celebrate! Contact your local animal shelter or Humane Society to learn more about responsible pet ownership. And ... consider taking in a "rescue" pet. There are so many animals out there who need you.

## KEEPING PETS SAFE AND SOUND

The North Shore Animal League America says: "Leaving a pet in a locked car on a 100° day is dangerous ... that's obvious. However, the mild days of spring and autumn can be just as life threatening. Leaving your pet in the car for "just a minute" can be deadly. A 70° or 80° day can heat up the interior of a car to 120° or 130° in 30 minutes or less - even with the windows cracked open. **Never, ever leave your pet alone in the car in ANY weather!"**

Also remember:

- ❖ Don't leave pets unattended where they can be stolen, injured, or become lost.
- ❖ Have a safe place to exercise your pet. A fenced in yard and long, leashed walks are ideal.
- ❖ Be sure that you have locks on your gates and regularly inspect your yard to be sure that there are no harmful items there.
- ❖ Make sure all pets wear ID tags at all times.
- ❖ To help you find a lost, strayed, or stolen pet, be sure you have an up-to-date color photo and accurate description (including breed, age, sex, size, weight, coloring, and any marks or scars) of your pet and keep a current list of phone numbers of local animal shelters, pounds, humane societies, and veterinary hospitals.

# Library Resources

## Seeing the World

📖 ***Baby Einstein: What Does Violet See? Birds and Nests*** by Julie Aigner-Clark; illustrations by Nadeem Zaidi; Hyperion Books for Children; New York; 2002; Board book $5.99. Violet is using binoculars to see the world around her like the flock of geese flying in between Violet and the puffy clouds. Introduces children to the idea of really looking at nature.

📖 ***Baby Einstein: The ABCs of Art*** by Julie Aigner-Clark; illustrations by Nadeem Zaidi; Hyperion Books for Children; New York; 2002; Hardcover $15.99. Introduces children to the letters of the alphabet through an exploration of works of art. From A is for Angel (Lorenzo Lotto, Angel Annunciating) to Z is for zebra (Andy Warhol, Gervy's Zebra).

📖 ***Ed Emberley's Drawing Book of Trucks and Trains***; Little, Brown & Company; Boston; Hardcover $15.95. A step-by-step analysis of how to draw trucks, trains, cars and more through building blocks of different shapes.

📖 ***In the Woods: Who's Been Here?*** by Lindsay Barrett George; Mulberry Paperback Book (William Morrow & Co); New York; 1998; Softcover $4.95. Cammy and William go for a walk in the woods. What they see around them sparks questions. Who's been in the nest in the tree? Who's gnawed the fallen branches of a tree? At the end of the book there's additional information on all the woodland creatures mentioned in the book.

📖 ***Look-Alikes*** by Joan Steiner; Little, Brown & Company; Boston; 1998; Hardcover, $12.95. Welcome to a world where things aren't what they seem. Joan Steiner creates whole landscapes with every-day objects. Gloves become couches, crackers are seat cushions for pretzel chairs. Have fun figuring out what objects have been used. If you get stumped, Steiner explains how she created the scenarios at the end of the book.

📖 ***Lunchtime for a Purple Snake*** by Harriet Ziefert; paintings by Todd McKie; Houghton Mifflin Company; Boston; 2003; Hardcover, $15.00. A little girl visits her grandpa who is an artist. Her grandpa introduces her to the colors and the process of painting. The book shows her art as she painted it starting with a purple snake then adding bugs and rocks until it is a completed painting.

📖 ***Museum ABC*** by the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Little, Brown & Company; Boston; 2002; Hardcover $16.95. Four pictures with very different treatments and styles for each letter. A is for Apple and there are works by Lichtenstein, Cezanne, Connelly and a piece attributed to a unknown Greek artist from 460 BC. Z is for zigzag with art by Charles Demuth, a wood block print by Hokusai, the detail of an apron from Carmeroon, a ceiling pattern from Thebes, tomb of Nakht. A wonderful introduction to the letters and to the rich diversity of artistic creations.

📖 ***Oodles to Do with Loo-Loo and Boo: The collected art adventures*** by Denis Roche, Houghton Mifflin Company; Boston; 2001; Spiral-bound soft cover $9.95. The projects from previous books have been collected into one place with a convenient spiral binding enabling you to open the book flat. Make clay beads, sculptures from boxes, prints from potato cut-outs and more.

📖 ***So You Want to be an Inventor?*** by Judith St. George and David Small; Philomel Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 2002; Hardcover $16.99. A kid-friendly book about some famous and not-so-famous inventors. Includes Elijah McCoy, son of runaway slaves, who invented a lubricator that oiled pistons, gears and bearings while the engine was running. And gave us the phrase "the real McCoy." Young Russian Igor Sikorsky who created the helicopter. Josephine Cochran who invented the first dishwasher. There's even inventions that were bizarre and inventions named after their creator.

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50 North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center

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# Cómo ser Padres por Separado

## *Pasando por el Proceso de Divorcio*

El proceso de separación y divorcio puede ser una experiencia muy conmovedora. A pesar de que algunos ex cónyuges dicen sentirse aliviados, para la mayoría el panorama emocional está predominantemente teñido de dolor, arrepentimiento, ambivalencia y rabia. A veces ex cónyuges se convierten en adversarios y terminan en un largo y tortuoso camino a través del sistema legal. En la mayoría de los casos ambas partes han dejado de hablarse.

Pocas parejas, incluso si siguen hablándose, se dan el tiempo para considerar cual será el impacto en sus niños. E, incluso si lo hacen, llegan a pocas conclusiones cómo: "Esto será doloroso, pero será más doloroso si nos quedamos juntos"; "No puedo vivir así. Si soy feliz los niños también lo serán"; "Son mis niños y yo sé que es lo mejor para ellos".

Padres bien intencionados se preocupan y, a veces saben intuitivamente, como les irá a sus hijos. Pero a veces se desconciertan o son sorprendidos cuando a los niños les va mal o tienen problemas. Incluso en el mejor de los casos, el divorcio crea conflicto en las vidas de los niños. Los matrimonios que se divorcian no pueden interrumpir los deberes de ser padres mientras que se arreglan las cosas. Cuando finalmente se resuelven las cosas todo el mundo tiene que proseguir con sus vidas.

Consiguientemente, la ya difícil tarea de ser padre tiene que ser aumentada para que incluya "garantizador crítico de primera línea" y "especialista en trauma y duelo". Esto es especialmente problemático dada la ya frágil posición emocional en la que se encuentran las parejas que están en el proceso de divorcio.. Aunque los costos reales a los niños continua siendo debatido, una cosa está meridianamente clara: se tiene que iniciar el control de daños inmediatamente.

Hay un viejo refrán sobre las familias: ningún niño de la misma familia tienen los mismos dos padres. Cada padre y cada hijo crea su propia relación original. Por lo tanto, también es justo decir que ninguno de los niños de la misma familia experimentará el divorcio de sus padres de la misma forma.

### Hacer el Divorcio más Fácil Para los Niños

Nadie puede predecir con certeza el impacto a largo plazo, pero hay varios factores que afectan como un niño reacciona al divorcio de sus padres.

No existe una buena edad para un niño cuando los padres se divorcian. Incluso los niños que han crecido frecuentemente se sienten tristes y necesitados si sus padres se separan. Pero la edad es una consideración en términos de las incipientes necesidades y habilidades físicas, intelectuales y emocionales del niño. Si los preescolares son descuidados, abandonados o desatendidos puede que encuentren difícil poder movilizar sus recursos y así poder lograr el próximo reto importante de su desarrollo. La separación de un padre por cualquier periodo de tiempo cuando el niño está a punto de ir al colegio, o a desarrollar habilidades del desarrollo como aprender a ir al baño, o incluso aprender como jugar con otros niños, puede ser difícil en estos momentos.

El mejor escenario es una separación amistosa, o por lo menos civilizada, con mínima interrupción de la actividades cotidianas del niño.

La conexión de los niños con sus padres es la fuente de su seguridad. Cuando la conexión se desmorona, cuando la vida familiar empieza a erosionarse, cuando un niño ha sido frecuentemente expuesto a dramas "con contenido para adultos", cuando observa como se desenvuelven crisis tras crisis

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en la familia, todo esto crea sentimientos de inseguridad.

Los problemas son menos probables cuando la relación con los padres es estrecha y de apoyo, y cuando los padres explican a sus hijos cuidadosa y concientemente el divorcio que se avecina.

Los padres deben hablarles a sus niños en lenguaje sencillo y claro, ofreciendo seguridad y consuelo. Los niños necesitan saber que no es su culpa y que sus padres seguirán ayudándoles. Los padres también necesitan darse el tiempo para contestar las preguntas de sus hijos. Los niños solo logran comprender y aceptar la realidad de un divorcio paulatinamente. Sus preguntas se repetirán, planteándose una y otra vez durante los siguientes días y semanas, y quizás meses.

Los momentos críticos frecuentemente están llenos de paradojas, y el proceso de divorcio no es una excepción. Cuando los padres están emocionalmente más débiles y más frágiles se les pide que sean más fuertes y mas firmes. Incluso en medio de su caos personal los adultos necesitan ser padres y dar un ambiente estable. Esto quiere decir que un padre debe ser perceptivo y receptivo a los gestos mas pequeños de los niños tanto como a las expresiones más dramáticas –es decir, a los susurros suaves como también a las grandes pataletas- y responder a ellas con respeto y comprensión.

Es difícil mantenerse emocionalmente vinculado con su hijo a través del proceso del divorcio. Requiere bastante fuerza y verdadero compromiso al bienestar de su hijo. Involucra ir más allá de las cavilaciones sobre heridas del pasado y el deseo de vengarse de su ex cónyuge y poder enfocar lo que es mejor para su niño.

He aquí algunos puntos que hay que tomar en cuenta para ayudar a su hijos a poder desenvolverse durante el proceso de divorcio.

**Conozca a sus niños y sea adepto a notar pequeños cambios en su personalidad.**

Después del divorcio la mayoría de los niños se apenará de la pérdida de su familia. A pesar que los niños muy pequeños no tienen el lenguaje afectivo para describir sus sentimientos, sus conductas nos darán un indicio de sus experiencias íntimas. Por ejemplo, un niño feliz y comunicativo puede ponerse retraído, el bebé tranquilo puede estar más calmado o incluso menos exigente que lo normal.

Una regla general es que durante momentos de estrés los niños generalmente tienen una regresión al nivel de su último desafió de desarrollo. Un bebé que ya sabe ir al baño puede empezar a no controlar su vejiga, el preescolar independiente puede angustiarse y ponerse regalón o empezar a chuparse el dedo. Un niño de kindergarten que antes era sano puede empezar a tener quejas somáticas como dolores de estomago o empezar a no querer ir al colegio.

Si puedes anticipar las reacciones de tus niños al cambio, entonces estarás mucho mejor equipada para calmar sus temores y angustias, y así volverlos a la normalidad.

**Donde sea posible déle un ambiente seguro a sus niños. La mayoría de los niños prosperan en la rutina.**

Trate mantener un ambiente predecible. Esto puede significar algo tan sencillo como seguir con los cuentos antes de dormir, la leche y galletas después de la pre-escuela o el juego usual de Metrópolis; pero esto también se aplica a decisiones de disciplina y de fijar límites. Las estructuras dan confianza y pueden dar al menos una defensa temporaria contra los sentimientos intensos y el caos emocional.

**El sentimiento de seguridad del niño también debe ser tomado en cuenta en el convenio de visitas.**

Idealmente, los convenios deben ser flexibles y reflejar las necesidades del desarrollo del niño. Frecuentemente el niño es exigido a pasar tiempo en ambos hogares. Si el niño tiene menos de tres años y está siendo acarreado de un lado a otro para visitas de una noche, esto puede tener un efecto perturbador. Esta angustia puede ser demostrada en trastornos del sueño, retrasos en el desarrollo del lenguaje, o una conducta retraída.

Un ambiente inestable lleno de cambios - con nuevos horarios, nuevos lugares para dormir- puede retrasar el logro de nuevas destrezas como la capacidad de estar solo o demostrar interés por otros.

**Ser padre por separado frecuentemente le presenta al padre que tiene tuición retos inesperados.**

El más evidente es que ahora uno tiene que batírselas solo y ser el único padre sin ningún respaldo. Esto significa que es crítico encontrar nuevas fuentes de apoyo. Aprenda a pedir ayuda a su familia y amigos o de contactar a las agencias locales que ofrecen grupos de apoyo o clases sobre ser padres. En otras palabras, ser padre solo es una nueva frontera, por lo tanto aprenda a obtener ayuda cuando la necesite.

**Finalmente, sea tolerante consigo mismo y trate de mantener una cierta perspectiva.**

El divorcio produce mucho estrés. Le puede dar algunas sorpresas inesperadas. Espere lo inesperado y aprenda a aceptarlo. Las conductas manifiestas de un niño no son el fin del mundo. Ambos pueden aprender de ellas si tienes paciencia y te das el tiempo para

comprender lo que tu niño y tu están sintiendo.

Si estás deprimido, irritable, o desgastado, no dejes que estos sentimientos sigan por mucho tiempo sin buscar ayuda. Necesitas fuerza emocional para criar a tus niños.

Recuerda que tu también eres un modelo para tus hijos. Tu conducta les enviará un mensaje sobre cómo manejar la desilusión, cómo resolver conflictos, y, lo más importante, cual es el verdadero significado de una familia.

***Linda Reilly, CSW, es la Coordinadora del North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center's Single Parent Action Network (SPAN).***

# Co-padres – Compartir las tareas de ser padre

La literatura actual sobre el divorcio sugiere que la tarea compartida de ser padres es el arreglo de preferencia. Los estudios demuestran que los niños del divorcio que tienen frecuentes interacción positiva con ambos padres tienen resultados más positivos en cuanto a ser un adolescente y adulto equilibrado.

Aunque un convenio de tuición compartida pareciera sentar las bases para compartir las tareas de ser padre, realmente compartir es mucho más complejo. Es mucho más que el acuerdo de visitas que requiere la cena del miércoles y fin de semana por medio con el otro padre. Incluso en acuerdos de tuición única compartir las tareas de ser padre es posible y deseable. Pero compartir ser padre significa una re-definición de la relación de ser padre. En el más puro sentido, ser padre es proactivo y preventivo, y ambos padres están involucrados.

***Hacer que funcione ser co-padres***

Ser co-padres es posible cuando ambos padres pueden:

Poner las necesidades del niño primero, dejando a un lado los rencores personales y los resentimientos y evitar gestos de represalias para satisfacer heridas y humillaciones del pasado. En cambio, los padres dan consistencia y estabilidad. Sus relaciones ahora son más parecidas a una asociación de negocios donde la meta final es el bienestar de sus hijos.

Acuerde abrir líneas de comunicación. Los co-padres se comprometen a diálogos continuos sobre las necesidades de su niño. Deje un espacio de tiempo para discutir los problemas de criar un niño de antemano, no simplemente cuando hay una emergencia. Igual como los negocios fijan metas, un acuerdo de ser co-padres funciona para adelantar una visión compartida de sus niños desde los detalles más sencillos hasta los ideales del futuro, desde enseñarle ir al baño, hasta educar a un adulto generosos y lleno de confianza.

Comparta información importante sin criticar. Mantenga al otro informado sobre horas con el médico, paseos y conferencias de la escuela, y sobre los logros más importantes del desarrollo.

Acate los acuerdos. Ya sea pasar a buscar el bebé a tiempo o no permitirle ver televisión cuando lo estas cuidando, siempre cumpla con lo acordado. Si sus decisiones originales parecieran que no están funcionando, es mejor renegociar el contrato que violarlo, acordar a cumplirlo y después hacer lo que uno quiere.

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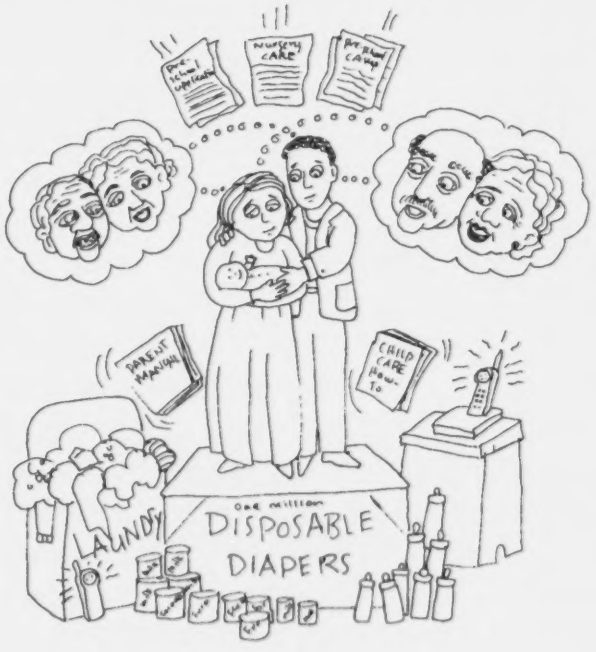
# How Babies Change Couples

## *Mastering the Details of Becoming Parents*

Will it be a boy or a girl? Have my nose or yours? Which name should we give the baby? Won't it be wonderful when the baby is finally born!

Becoming parents is a joyful event in the life of a couple. During the last months of pregnancy parents are becoming increasingly prepared, excited, and preoccupied with the baby's arrival. Then, after the birth, mastering the details of caring for a totally dependent being, getting to know their baby, and building a new relationship as mother and father. Most parents are prepared for the awesome sense of responsibility, the endless fatigue from disrupted sleep, and the anxious concern for their infant's safety and well-being.

Many couples also know that how they care for and relate to their baby during those early months of life affects their baby's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Couples are less prepared for the major impact of parenthood on their relationship as a couple, learning only later that attending to and nurturing their relationship with each other is an essential part of being caring and emotionally available parents.




### *Parenthood is an Opportunity for Growth as a Couple*

In the midst of coping with a crying baby, or navigating around boxes of disposable diapers piling up in corners, or listening to grandparents supplying daily doses of advice, it may be hard to believe, but the transition to parenthood offers an opportunity for growth both as individuals and as a couple.

A baby's birth marks the transformation of the nature of the bond between people from one that may be ended by divorce or separation, to one that may change but will last a lifetime. A relationship can end; having created a child together doesn't.

The fact of this never-to-be-broken bond, and the new demands of parenting lend urgency to acknowledging and working on any long-standing relationship problems. Even if they've had relatively little impact on the overall quality of your relationship up to this point, those small disagreements may now escalate and have negative consequences not only for yourselves, but also for your child. Parents need all the stamina and support they can muster.

### *Parenthood is a Major Stressor for Couples*

Although the transition to becoming parents offers positive growth potential, it's also a major stressor for a couple's relationship. Experiencing problems is a normal part of any relationship. However, if they aren't solved during

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pregnancy or shortly after the baby's birth these issues may leave one or both partners feeling vulnerable and devalued, just at a time when each needs support and appreciation.

You're trying to make decisions about the new baby, matters such as selecting and using child-care, determining the amount and kind of religious involvement, finding a pediatrician you trust, and choosing what approaches to follow in daily child-rearing situations. And you're startled to realize you and your partner disagree.

Then, there are the outside forces – increased contacts with family members and a genuine need for their help and advice. But these outside forces may conflict with your need to form a bond with your baby, find your own way of doing things, and establish yourselves as separate from your families of origin.

To meet the physical and emotional demands of parenting, couples will need to negotiate and renegotiate a host of issues in their own relationship. These may include division of labor around chores and baby care: who cleans and cooks, who changes diapers, or who gets up in the middle of the night to feed or rock the baby?.

There are also involvements with family and friends. What is the best balance between welcoming visitors and spending time alone as a family? Will accepting offers of help increase closeness or strain relationships and create a sense of obligation? Will refusing offers result in hurt feelings?

You may need to make new decisions about work and finances. Will one or both partners work? What is the best time to return to work? Should the schedule be full or part-time? How much childcare is affordable? The process of discussing and solving these issues can increase a couple's sense of intimacy, connection, and commitment to each other. But it needs to be approached with mutual respect and a spirit of "we-ness", a mutual dedication to your new role as parents.

Research has also confirmed what most parents discover, that the birth of a first child and the transition to parenthood are stressful. Various studies have found a significant decrease in satisfaction with the marriage, a steep drop in the quality of the relationship, and an increase in conflicts during the first year of parenthood. Couples revert to stereotypical gender roles; are exhausted, fatigued, and irritable as they confront the overwhelming demands of housework and child care; and have little or no time or interest in adult conversation, fun as a couple, or even sexual contact.

In some ways it's surprising that children detract from rather than enhance a couple's happiness with each other, particularly in the first year of parenthood, because this disturbing trend is accompanied by an increase in joy and pleasure in the baby. Parents seem to be enjoying being parents rather than being partners. But, it is possible to have both.

### *Preserve your Relationship as You Become Parents*

What can couples do to enhance their relationship? How can parents minimize the negative impact of their difficulties as a couple on their child or on their ability to parent? What are common sources of stress that new parents should strive to avoid? And finally, what can couples do to mutually support each other and enhance the positive aspects of their relations?

It is important to maintain a spirit of cooperation. Always assume your partner's good intentions. Consider differences as reflections of genuine efforts to meet responsibilities and solve problems. Try to include ideas from each partner when making decisions.

Try to approach plans to meet your new

### *Of Note ...*

📖 ***Becoming Parents: How to strengthen your marriage as your family grows*** by Pamela L. Jordan, Scott M. Stanley, Howard J. Markman; Jossey-Bass Publishers; San Francisco; 1999; Hardcover $24.00.

A very helpful book filled with exercises and examples. It discusses how to communicate to reduce conflict – providing specific suggestions and techniques. It examines the importance of shared core values and how to work through disagreements. It provides information on the effects of children on sexual intimacy and ways that effect can be minimized and physical relationships enhanced. Plus other issues such as stress and fatigue.

### *Bathroom*

It's a Saturday afternoon. The little ones are (supposedly) napping so Hubby and I go upstairs for a little ... well, you know...

Our bedroom door is broken and doesn't lock, so we resourcefully camp out in our bathroom, which does have a locking door.

So there we are, lying on our tile floor, and, well, you know – when all of a sudden we hear the familiar pitter-patter of our non-napping three-year-old. He's now in our bedroom.

"Mom? Dad? Where are you?" He starts to cry, then sees our closed bathroom door and fiddles with it. "Are you in there?" he sobs.

We have no choice but to postpone (again) our little session, and we open the door.

"Sometimes Mommy and Daddy like to nap in the bathroom," we quickly improvise. He accepts this without question. "Oh."

That night we're heading upstairs for bed. "Mom, can I sleep in your bathroom too, tonight?" he asks, as if it's the most natural thing in the universe.

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responsibilities with flexibility and good humor. Be willing to change plans when they prove too complicated or tiring for baby or parents. Avoid blaming each other or self-criticism. It takes trial and error to learn how long you need just to be ready to leave the house and that lugging baby paraphernalia can make accomplishing the simplest task seem like climbing Mt. Everest.

Reflect honestly on your strengths and weaknesses as a couple and as individuals. If you rarely were on time for appointments before becoming parents, make certain to make plans that will not be spoiled by a late arrival now that you are likely to be slowed down by your baby. Do not expect a disorganized partner to suddenly become a paragon of neatness and organization. Either lower your standards or be willing to seek outside help to meet them. This will help you to anticipate potential problems, be realistic in your mutual expectations, and identify issues you need to address as a couple.

Set aside regular times to discuss how things are going. When you have these discussions highlight the positive. Remember, you wouldn't enjoy hearing a list of what you're doing wrong and neither would your partner.

Sharing your feelings is important but how you communicate is crucial. Nothing can erode a relationship more than feeling unheard, having your feelings or opinions discounted or ridiculed, or believing you cannot influence family decisions. Discussions that descend into mutual blaming or screaming matches create anger and resentment that will only drive partners apart. The solution is for both parties to listen and respond respectfully.

Acknowledge your partners efforts to consider your concerns and requests, and extend the same courtesy to your partner. When something goes wrong, assume good intentions and take the time to talk with your partner about what has occurred. This will help avoid negative interpretations of honest mistakes, misunderstandings, or unavoidable outside circumstances. These efforts will go a long way toward protecting a relationship.

Although this is particularly important in the first year of parenthood, it's never too late for genuine efforts to improve communication. Developing positive patterns of interacting to decrease tension, disappointment, and bitterness in a relationship can begin at any time.

Focus on problem-solving rather than assigning blame or exchanging criticisms. Listen to each other's feelings and concerns about an issue before attempting to problem-solve. Review and modify agreed upon solutions after a brief trial of one or two weeks.

Avoid escalations of conflicts by agreeing in advance on ways to signal each other to stop unproductive bickering. Help each other identify topics and patterns of communication that tend to intensify anger. If this happens, take a time-out and agree to resume discussions at a set time when both of you are calmer.

Putting these approaches into practice will reduce stress in your relationship, enhance your feelings of competence, and decrease the inevitable sense of being out of control and overwhelmed that even the most organized and confident parents may feel.

### *Manage Time Realistically*

One of the greatest sources of stress to couples is managing time realistically. Babies disrupt the best-laid plans and schedules. They may nap longer than expected, need a diaper and clothing change as you are about to leave the house, or become cranky or hungry. But there are solutions.

Whenever possible keep plans flexible. This means planning for alternatives rather than sticking to a rigid schedule that can no longer be met, and alerting friends or family that changes may be necessary. For example, when invited to a family meal, tell your family in advance to start eating without you if you are late. Agree to call as soon as possible if you feel you must change plans, but make clear that for now, the baby's needs must come first.

Take the time to discuss with your partner in advance any misgivings you have about agreed upon plans. Long car trips can often be more difficult than anticipated. Discussing concerns about such trips in advance will decrease tensions and enable you to modify plans realistically and result in fewer disappointments all around.

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Share information with each other about work schedule changes. Never assume these won't make a difference to the partner who is home with the baby. Arrange for help with care of your baby when you have work or appointments that must be attended to on a fixed schedule.

### *Find Sources of Support*

Another major stressor for new parents can be differing views about the need for outside help in the home, and about who would be a suitable caretaker of the baby. Couples need to be willing to ask for help. However, involving grandparents or other relatives can result in one or both partners feeling intruded upon or indebted. In some families this could cause old problems to surface. Discuss concerns in advance and decide jointly whether offered help will be a support or cause tension in the couple or the extended family.

Similarly, financial concerns about paid childcare need careful consideration of the emotional as well as monetary costs and benefits.

### *Babies Decrease Availability to Each Other*

Partners' emotional and physical presence changes drastically with the arrival of a baby. Each partner develops a relationship with the baby, and this, at times, may leave the other person feeling left out or disregarded. Emotional investment and preoccupation with the baby is a necessary process for attachment to develop, but it may leave you with little energy to meet the emotional needs of your partner. Fatigue, which always seems to accompany having a new baby, may also limit partners' availability to each other.

Work demands can also limit available time and investment in the couple's relationship. When one parent stays home with the baby, the other parent may increase hours at work to bring in additional income. This can leave the parent who is home with the baby feeling unsupported, isolated from adult contact, and even abandoned by their partner. The working partner may then feel hurt, underappreciated and angry.

When both parents work, dealing with the logistics of meeting home, infant and job responsibilities, as well as ambivalence and guilt over time away from the baby may leave a couple with little energy, inclination, or time to give to their relationship with each other.

### *Take the Time to Nurture your Relationship*

Couples often feel they are good parents, but miss the intimate time together, sexual contact, or just plain sharing of interests or opinions that do not revolve around their child. Set aside regular time for each other, even if this involves only a walk or a cup of coffee. Many couples find that this helps to preserve a sense of still being an adult twosome as well as part of their new family of three.

If making time to be together, at least in the beginning, seems too much of a challenge, find ways to let your partner know you have him or her in mind and to nurture the non-parental side of your relationship. Take a minute a few times a day to share a hug, write a loving note, bring home a favorite food as a treat, or make a telephone call to your partner.

The transition to parenthood is a major event in a couple's relationship. It transforms their bond to one that cannot ever be completely severed. It can be a source of joy, and can offer an opportunity for growth, but it is also a significant stressor. Attending to their own relationship will help a couple continue to meet the physical and emotional demands of parenting.

When a couple can find ways to improve communication, increase mutual support, and nurture the positive aspects of their relationship, the stresses of parenting a new baby can be minimized. Most importantly, listen to each other, express respect for differing opinions and approaches, and try to avoid escalation of conflicts. When couples focus on supporting each other and emphasize the things that bring them together, they improve their ability to parent and also help ensure that their relationship as a couple remains as much a source of joy and satisfaction as their new baby.

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# Library Resources

## Mother Books, Father Books, Family Books

### Mothers

📖 ***Count the Ways, Little Brown Bear*** by Jonathan London; illustrated by Margie Moore; Dutton Children's Books; New York; 2002; Hardcover $14.99. How much does Mama Brown Bear love her baby? More than Little Brown Bear loves sweet berry pie, more than they love to rub their backs against the trees. More than all the stars in the sky.

📖 ***Kisses for Mommy!*** Photographs by Elizabeth Hathon; Grosset & Dunlap (Penguin Putnam Inc.); New York; 2001; Boardbook, $5.99. Photographs of a mix of mothers and babies with sweet, simple verse.

📖 ***Thanks, Mom*** by Ed Emberley; Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 2003; Hardcover $15.95. Kiko the circus mouse sees the cheese, takes it, and runs off. He's pursued by Gato the cat, and Gato is pursued by Fido the dog. Eventually they are all followed by Mumbo the elephant. But then, Mumbo sees Koko, the mother mouse and the pursued becomes the pursuer. "Thanks, Mom." Emberley also uses basic shapes in amazing ways to create colorful, dynamic, and highly visual characters.

### Fathers

📖 ***Giggles with Daddy!*** Photographs by Elizabeth Hathon; Grosset & Dunlap (Penguin Putnam); New York; 2001; Boardbook $5.99. Photographs of a mix of dads and their babies as they giggle all over town; in sweet simple verse.

📖 ***Kevin and His Dad*** by Irene Smalls; illustrated by Michael Hays; Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 1999; Hardcover, $15.95. "On Saturday, with Mom away, Dad and I work - then we play." A boy and his father enjoy each other as they do chores and play, spending a warm and lovely day together. "I love being with my dad; he's the best friend a guy ever had." Luminous paintings add to the book's warmth.

📖 ***You & Your Dad*** by Lou Alpert; Whispering Coyote Press; Dallas; 1992; Softcover $5.95. A gentle book filled with dads of all kinds. He might work in an office, drive a tractor, or wear a suit. Dads do all kinds of things with their children. "Wherever you go and whatever you do, your dad is special and so are you!"

### Family Books

📖 ***Cherish Me*** by Joyce Carol Thomas; pictures by Nneka Bennett; HarperFestival; New York; 1998; Hardcover $9.95. Thomas' lovely verse and Bennet's exuberant art make a perfect merger.

📖 ***Edwurd Fudwupper Fibbed Big*** by Berkeley Breathed; Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 2000; $6.99. A story of sibling rivalry, fibbing and redemption. Ed is a liar, but when he tells this one big whopper an alien comes and threatens him. His sister Fanny offers to take the fall for him but the alien knows the situation. The alien is quite taken by Fanny and her devotion. Edwurd learns an important lesson about honesty and family love. A book that parents will also enjoy.

📖 ***His Mother's Nose*** by Peter Maloney & Felicia Zekauskas; Dial Books for Young Readers (Penguin Putnam Inc.); New York; 2001; Hardcover $15.99. "Everyone who saw Percival saw something of themselves in him." From his mother's nose to his aunt's ear for music. Then, one morning all these things disappeared! His grandparents helped him realize that there's a little bit of everyone in everybody.

# Dear Reader ...

I well remember the early days after my son was born. My husband and I found that life became a succession of hot meals eaten cold and cold meals eaten warm. No matter how or what we planned, the baby would change everything.

All we seemed to do was feed him and change diapers. But in between the chaos there were moments of incredible joy and satisfaction as we watched the little person we created smile, gurgle, or just watch us with his wide-open eyes.

The one thing we didn't have time for was one another. And we missed that. When people become parents, their relationship with often suffers as their attention is devoted to their child. And if there's a second child, it happens again. So, this month we asked Barbara Russek, Psy. D. to share ways parents can maintain their relationship.

It's the beginning of summer and our Health Corner discusses summer skin safety. We hope you'll find it helpful.

As many have read, Fred Rogers, the warm loving man behind Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood, recently died. His gentleness and wisdom will be missed.

As I write these words, there's actually several inches of snow outside my window. The calendar tells me that spring is here. And I know that summer is coming. Perhaps there's a message here. Even when things look wintry and bleak, the flowers eventually bloom. And they'll be all the more precious as a result.

Heala Schwartzberg



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# Focus On...

## Building Strong Families

The YMCA of the USA and Search Institute recently released the results of a preliminary study on What Parents Need to Succeed. It's based on a poll of over 1,000 parents across the United States, and it investigated how much support and success parents experience in raising children and teenagers.

As a result of that investigation, the researchers designed this parenting self-quiz. We are reproducing it with permission from the Search Institute and YMCA of the USA. We thought you might find it interesting.

***1. Do you feel that as a parent you are going it alone?***

If so, you have company. Fifty-three percent of those surveyed responded that they don't seek much help or advice in raising their children.

But don't be afraid to reach out. Being a parent is one of the toughest jobs in the world. If you had a question about a project at work you'd ask for clarification, wouldn't you? Your children are your most amazing accomplishment and most important responsibility. Why not ask others to help and support you?

***2. Would you describe your relationship with your spouse or parenting partner as strong?***

Despite the importance of this relationship, 50% of parents surveyed said they lacked a strong relationship with their spouse or partner.

A strong parenting partner makes a big difference. Survey respondents reported that when they had a supportive partner, they were more likely to feel successful and confident, experience fewer challenges and be open to other learning and support. Communication is the key to all excellent relationships. Making it a priority to keep communication lines open and your relationship strong is good for you and for your kids.

***3. Do you feel successful as a parent every day?***

Only 34 percent of parents surveyed feel successful every day.

Although parenting requires daily effort, most parents don't experience positive results every day. It's discouraging to work very hard every day at a job without a gauge to measure your success, or any positive feedback. But remember, your true success as a parent only becomes clear over time – sometimes years. In the meantime, celebrate the little things. And talk with other parents. They can help you decide whether you need to try something new.

***4. Do you feel unprepared for parenting situations that arise?***

Fifty-two percent of survey respondents said "feeling unprepared" contributed to their feelings of dissatisfaction with their parenting.

Other reported parenting challenges include "feeling overwhelmed" and "feeling unsupported by family and friends." The best way to meet these challenges is to seek support. When you're feeling unprepared or unsupported, the first person who needs to know is your spouse or parenting partner. Share your feelings and other suggestions for what they can do to help you. Also, find others who can listen and offer perspective.

***5. Do you have other caring adults actively participating in your child's life?***

Seventy-one percent of parents surveyed believed having other adults who they trust spend time with their kids would be helpful. And, 67 percent said it would help them to hear they were doing a good job.

Help yourself and your children by seeking out caring adults in your family or neighborhood who don't have children or whose children are grown. Invite them to spend time with your children to enrich everyone's lives. And, try to compliment other parents when you can. A little support goes a long way.

➔ Reproduced with permission from the Search Institute/YMCA of the USA. If you'd like more information on the research visit www.abundantassets.org

## Exercising With Kids

Parents these days are much more active than parents of a generation ago. We all want to be physically fit and to teach our children good fitness habits as well. Parents who want to spend more time with their children may want to think about taking kids along when they exercise.

Adults who bike might enjoy taking their child for a ride. But remember that only an experienced biker should attempt to do this. Practice using a ride-along trailer for a few weeks before you take your child and remember that both you and your child should wear safety helmets.

When walking or hiking, adults should use a baby carrier that will allow you to move with your hands free. Make sure that the carrier has wide straps so you can distribute weight easily.

The best method for jogging is to use a baby jogger. This a rolling pushcart that a parent can jog behind and push. Remember to be sure that the jogger is safety rated, that the handles have good grips, and never jog on uneven surfaces or rough terrain.

➔ These suggestions come from the American Chiropractic Association and its Council on Occupational Health.

# *"I Love You Too, Mr. Rogers"*

I walked into the living room that dark, snowy afternoon. There was my three year old daughter sitting, enthralled, in front of the television set. A soft voice was saying "...and remember, I love you just the way you are," the typical closing line for *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. In the silent room a little voice whispered a response, "I love you too, Mr. Rogers."

The late Fred Rogers was a man who touched millions of children's hearts over his forty years on television. He spent his career not only entertaining and educating children; he also supported children helping them feel listened to, respected, and safe.

The moment we learned he had passed away, everyone here at *Parent & preschooler Newsletter* felt that we had to take a moment to write a special tribute to this wonderful and gentle man who has made an invaluable contribution to the lives of so many of us. Our newsletter is published by the North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center. As news of Mr. Rogers' passing filtered through the building we could literally see people stop in their tracks and receive this news as though it were a member of their family - and, just perhaps, he was in a very real and substantive way. Fred Rogers had truly become a member of our family leaving a legacy of grace, kindness, intelligence, and the supreme elegance of tenderness. He helped and encouraged parents to keep their children safe and empowered - teaching us all about conflict resolution, appropriate ways to deal with anger, and helping us to understand that the most important things in life are to listen to, appreciate, and love each other.

Over the four decades of his work, he has left us all a tremendous archive of television programs, videos, and books that will continue to influence the way we all raise our children. It is so sad that he is gone now, especially during these turbulent and troubling times; we need him more than we have ever needed him. "Good-bye Mr. Rogers - we all love you too - and we will certainly, certainly miss you."

***Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour***
***and the Staff of "Parent & preschooler Newsletter"***
***and North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center***

## Some Special Gifts from Fred Rogers

The legacy of educational materials that Fred Rogers left is overwhelming. Not only was he talented and prolific, each item is touched in a special way by his insight, dignity, and love of life. Here is a very small sampling of the lasting gifts from Mister Fred Rogers.

📖 ***Mister Rogers Talks to Parents***; by Fred Rogers and Barry Head. This wonderful book includes discussions of the "tough" questions parents face. With his usual charm, gentleness, and intelligence, Mr. Rogers offers good advice to parents.

📖 ***The New Baby*** by Fred Rogers and Jim Judkis. For a firstborn child, the arrival of a baby brother or sister is almost sure to arouse mixed feelings. Along with all of the excitement, a new person is now sharing all of the attention and love that the first child once had. In his direct and understanding way, Fred Rogers gets right to the heart of the matter.

📖 ***Going to Day Care*** by Fred Rogers. This book describes the typical activities and feelings children can experience at a day care center, including the fun, excitement, and apprehensions involved in being away from home and without parents.

📖 ***Going to the Potty*** by Fred Rogers and Jim Judkis. There's so much to learn about growing up! And learning to use the potty may not be an easy task at first, but it is one of the ways in which parents and children realize just how much they are learning and growing. Fred Rogers explains the process of toilet training with his usual gentle warmth.

📖 ***Divorce*** by Fred Rogers. Mr. Rogers' talent for explaining scary emotional upheaval to young children shines in this book. He offers caring support and validation for families working through such trauma as divorce and supplies concrete examples of ways families can deal with the stress. This book provides honest reassurance to kids and parents alike.

📖 ***Mister Rogers' Playbook*** by Fred Rogers and Barry Head. This book encourages children to explore, create, and pretend with dozens of nurturing and easy-to-do activities.

📖 ***If We Were All the Same*** by Fred Rogers and Pat Sustendal. Tired of looking exactly alike, the people of the purple planet decide to become more colorful; an important discussion of ethnicity providing valuable information.

📼 ***Mister Rogers Home Video*** Series. This series of videos covers subjects such as Musical Stories, Dinosaurs and Monsters, and so much more.

💻 **Look for Mister Rogers Neighborhood** at:
http://pbskids.org/rogers/

For information on any of the above books or videos contact:
www.misterrogers.org

*"It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor, would you be mine?"*

## Healthy Summer Skin

Skin is the human body's largest organ, and surprisingly sensitive. In winter it can dry out and crack. In summer it can burn. Repeated exposure to the sun can lead to skin cancer later on. Skin cancer is the most common form and it is easily prevented. Although we still associate tanning with health, tanning actually is the type of ultraviolet exposure that can lead to serious skin cancer.

Martin Weinstock, M.D., Ph.D.; professor of dermatology; director of the pigmented lesions unit at Brown University; chief of dermatology at the VA Medical Center in Providence, RI; and chair of the American Cancer Society's skin cancer advisory group was interviewed by Health Behavior News Service.

Q. *What happens when someone gets a tan?*

A. Ultraviolet radiation that hits the skin causes a reaction in the melanocytes, pigment-producing skin cells, to produce a browner color in the skin.

It is not the brown color that causes the problem. What causes the problem is the ultraviolet radiation that triggers this response, because that same ultraviolet radiation causes damage in the DNA of skin cells as well as other types of damage to the skin, and that is what has been related to risk of skin cancer.

If people get tan skin or have tan skin without exposing themselves to ultraviolet light, there's no problem with that, it doesn't increase their risk of skin cancer. It's not the tan that's the problem; it's the ultraviolet radiation used to get a tan.

Q. *What role do parents need to take in ensuring that their children are protected from sun exposure?*

A. The first thing they can do is protect their children from intense sunlight when they're particularly young. That's when parents have complete control. We have a slogan at the American Cancer Society, "Slip, Slop, Slap." Slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen, slap on a hat. And that's a good way to avoid ultraviolet damage.

Q. *Can people rely solely on sunscreen, if applied properly and frequently, or are other measures required?*

A. The sun is out there, and you've got to protect yourself from intense exposure. You can do that by scheduling activities so they're not during the middle of the day when the sun is its most intense, or by using sun-protective clothing or sunscreen or some combination of those methods. A combination of strategies is generally recommended.

Unfortunately, a lot of people simply do not use sunscreen correctly. One of the findings in a survey we did was that a lot of people, when they got the worst sunburn of the summer, were using a sunscreen with SPF 15 or greater. That would seem to be the opposite of what you would expect, until you look at how people use sunscreen. If someone goes to the beach, plays a couple of games of volleyball, and then says "My skin is turning red, I'd better put on some sunscreen," well, obviously that is too late. Most of the damage has already been done.

The other problem is that people may use too little sunscreen. Or it can wash off, if it's not waterproof or water-resistant.

Q. *What is the current thinking on sunscreen rating? Is higher better?*

A. I recommend a SPF 30 or greater. If you go from a 30 to a 45, the difference in protection is not that great. But if you go from a 5 to a 30, that is a big difference. As you get to higher numbers, the differences become less important.

Taking care of your children's skin is particularly important because kids are particularly vulnerable.

"Sunburns at any point in one's life have implications for skin cancer risk," according to Allan C. Halpern, M.D., chief of dermatology services at Memorial-Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, co-chair of the National Council for Skin Cancer Prevention, and a vice president of the Skin Cancer Foundation. "It is true, however, that childhood sun exposure may play a disproportionate role in the formation of skin cancer. This may be because many of us get most of our sun exposure in childhood, or it may well relate to childhood being a time of greater susceptibility to the development of skin cancer."

### Points for Parents and Children

☼ Excessive sun exposure is dangerous.

☼ Use a broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15, 30 is even better. Make sure to use enough sunscreen for adequate protection.

☼ Wear a hat that covers and shades the head, face, neck and ears.

☼ Wear UV-blocking sunglasses, preferably ones that wrap around and protect the very sensitive skin around the eyes.

☼ Try to avoid activities during the most sun-intense parts of the day, 10 AM to 2 PM or when your shadow is shorter than you.

☼ Seek shade whenever possible.

➲ Information for this column was provided by Health Behavior News Service at: http://www.cfah.org.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

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NEWSLETTER

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# Cómo los Bebés Cambian a las Parejas

## *Cómo Dominar los Detalles de Convertirse en Padres*

*¿Será un niño o una niña? ¿Tendrá mi nariz o la tuya? ¿Qué nombre le pondremos al bebé?* ¡No será maravilloso cuando el bebé finalmente nazca!

Convertirse en padres es un evento dichoso en la vida de una pareja. Durante los últimos meses del embarazo los padres se preparan más, estan más entusiasmados, y más preocupados de la llegada del bebé. Acto seguido, después del nacimiento, hay que aprender los detalles de cuidar a un ser completamente dependiente, conocer al bebé, y construir una nueva relación como madre y padre. La mayoría de los padres están preparados para el inmenso sentimiento de responsabilidad, la interminable fatiga de no poder dormir sin interrupciones, y la angustiosa preocupación por el bienestar y seguridad del bebé.

Muchas parejas también saben que cómo cuidan y se relacionan con su bebé durante esos primeros meses de vida afecta el desarrollo emocional, social, cognitivo y físico de su bebé. Las parejas están menos preparadas para el impacto primordial de ser padres sobre la relación de pareja, y solo aprenden después que cuidar y criar la relación entre ellos es una parte esencial de ser padres considerados que están emocionalmente disponibles.

### Ser Padres es una Oportunidad Para Crecer Como Pareja

En medio de tratar de manejar un bebé que llora, o encontrado camino en medio de cajas de pañales desechables que se amontonan en cada rincón, o escuchando a los abuelos que ofrecen sus diarias dosis de consejos, puede ser difícil de creer, pero la transición de ser padres ofrece una oportunidad de crecimiento como personas y como pareja.

El nacimiento de un bebé marca la transformación de la naturaleza del vínculo entre las personas, de una que quizás termine en el divorcio o separación a una que puede cambiar pero que durará toda la vida. Una relación puede terminar; haber creado un niño juntos no.

El hecho de este vínculo que nunca se quebrará y las nuevas demandas de ser padres, le dan urgencia a reconocer y enfrentar los problemas de una relación de largo plazo. Aunque hayan tenido relativamente poco impacto en la calidad general de la relación hasta el momento, esos pequeños desacuerdos pueden exacerbarse y tener consecuencias negativas no solo para Uds. sino que también para su niño. Los padres necesitan toda la energía y apoyo que puedan conseguir.

### Ser Padres es un Estrés Importante Para las Parejas

Aunque la transición hacia convertirse en padres ofrece el potencial de crecimiento positivo, es un factor de estrés importante para la relación de pareja. Experimentar problemas es una parte normal de cualquiera relación. Sin embargo, si no son resueltos durante el embarazo o poco después del nacimiento del bebé estos problemas pueden dejar a uno o ambas partes de la pareja vulnerables y disminuidos, justo en el momento en que cada uno de ellos necesita apoyo y aprecio.

Estás tratando de adoptar decisiones sobre el nuevo bebé, factores como la selección y el uso de jardines infantiles, determinar la cantidad de religiosidad, encontrar a un pediatra a quien confías, y eligiendo la pautas a seguir en las situaciones cotidianas de criar un niño. Y te asombras cuando te das cuenta que tu y tu pareja están en desacuerdo.

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Además, hay fuerzas externas –más contacto con miembros de la familia y una verdadera necesidad de obtener su ayuda y consejos. Pero estas fuerzas externas pueden entrar en conflicto con tu necesidad de forjar un vínculo con tu bebé, encontrar tu propia manera de hacer las cosas, y declarar la independencia de tus familias de origen.

Para enfrentar las demandas físicas y emocionales de ser padres, las parejas deberán negociar y renegociar un sinnúmero de temas de su relación. Estos pueden incluir la división del trabajo con referencia a las labores domésticas y el cuidado del bebé: ¿quien limpia y cocina, quien cambia los pañales, o quien se levanta a mitad de noche para alimentar o tranquilizar el bebé?

También están las relaciones con la familia y los amigos. ¿Cual es el mejor equilibrio entre darle la bienvenida a las visitas y pasar tiempo solos como familia? ¿Aceptar las ofertas de ayuda aumenta la confianza o crea estrés en las relaciones y crea una sensación de obligación? ¿Rechazar una oferta tendrá como resultado sentimientos ofendidos?

Quizás tengas que hacer nuevas decisiones sobre tu vida laboral y finazas. ¿Va a trabajar uno o dos cónyuges? ¿Cual es el mejor momento de volver al trabajo? ¿El horario debe ser parcial o de tiempo completo? ¿Cuanta ayuda doméstica se puede costear? El proceso de discutir y resolver estos problemas puede aumentar la sensación de intimidad, de unión y compromiso de la pareja. Pero tiene que ser enfocado con respeto mutuo, un espíritu de "nosotros", una dedicación recíproca a tu nuevo papel como padres.

Las investigaciones también han confirmado lo que la mayoría de los padres descubren solos: que el nacimiento del primer niño y la transición a ser padres es estresante. Varios estudios han descubierto una importante disminución en la satisfacción con el matrimonio, una fuerte baja en la calidad de la relación y un aumento en los conflictos durante el primer año de ser padres. Las parejas revierten a roles de género estereotípicos; están agotados, fatigados e irritables a medida que enfrentan las abrumadoras demandas del trabajo doméstico y el cuidado del bebé; y tienen poco o nada de tiempo o interés para conversaciones de adultos, pasarlo bien como pareja, e incluso el contacto sexual.

De cierta manera es sorprendente que los niños disminuyan en vez de aumentar la felicidad de la pareja, especialmente en el primer año de ser padres, porque esta inquietante tendencia está acompañada por un aumento de felicidad y placer con el bebé. Los padres parecen estar gozando ser padres en vez de ser pareja. Pero es posible ser ambas cosas.

### Preserve su Relación Mientras se Convierte en Padres

¿Qué pueden hacer las parejas para mejorar su relación? ¿Cómo pueden los padres minimizar el impacto negativo de sus dificultades como pareja en su niño o su capacidad de ser padres? ¿Cuales son las causas fuentes más comunes de estrés que los nuevos padres deben tratar de evitar? Y, finalmente, ¿qué pueden hacer las parejas para apoyarse mutuamente y realzar los aspectos positivos de su relación?

Es importante mantener un espíritu de cooperación. Siempre suponga las buenas intenciones de su pareja. Considera las diferencias como reflejo de un genuino esfuerzo de asumir responsabilidades y resolver problemas, Trata de incluir las ideas de ambos al adoptar una decisión.

Trata de enfocar los planes para enfrentar tus nuevas responsabilidades con flexibilidad y buen humor. Esté dispuesto a cambiar planes cuando resultan ser demasiado complicados o fatigantes para el bebé o los padres. Evita echarle la culpa al otro o la autocrítica. Se necesita practica para aprender cuanto tiempo se necesita simplemente para poder salir de la casa y acarrear todos los accesorios del bebé puede convertir la tarea más básica en como escalar el Everest.

Reflexiona honestamente en tus fortalezas y debilidades como pareja y como individuos. Si tu pocas veces llegabas a tiempo a reuniones antes de ser padre, asegúrate de hacer planes que no serán echados a perder por llegar atrasados ahora que seguramente serás retrasado por tu bebé. No esperes que un cónyuge desorganizado se convierta súbitamente en un modelo de orden y organización. O bajas tus estándares o tienes que estar dispuesta a buscar ayuda para poder cumplir con ellos. Esto te ayudará a anticipar posibles problemas, a ser realista en cuanto a tus expectativas mutuas, e identificar problemas que tienes que enfrentar como pareja.

Programa tiempo frecuentemente para discutir como van las cosas. Cuando tengas estas discusiones recalca lo positivo. Recuerda, a ti tampoco te gustaría escuchar una lista de lo que estás haciendo mal y a tu pareja tampoco.

Compartir tus sentimientos es importante pero cómo te comunicas es crucial. Nada puede erosionar una relación más que sentirse no escuchado, tener tus opiniones desoídas o ridiculizadas, o creer que no puedes influir en las decisiones familiares. Las discusiones que sucumben en culpar al otro o en griterías crean rabia y resentimiento que solo alejará a tu pareja. La solución es que ambas partes escuchen y respondan con respeto.

Reconoce los esfuerzos de tu pareja de considerar tus inquietudes y peticiones, y concédale la misma cortesía a tu cónyuge. Cuando algo no resulta, supone buenas intenciones y tómate el tiempo de conversar con tu pareja sobre lo que ha ocurrido. Esto será útil para evitar interpretaciones negativas de errores sin malas intenciones, malentendidos, o circunstancias externas

inevitables. Estos esfuerzos serán muy útiles para proteger una relación.

Aunque esto es especialmente importante durante el primer año de ser padres, nunca es demasiado tarde para hacer esfuerzos genuinos para mejorar la comunicación. El desarrollo de patrones positivos de interacción para disminuir la tensión, desilusión, y la amargura en una relación puede comenzar en cualquier momento.

Enfoca la resolución de conflictos en vez de asignar culpa o intercambiar críticas. Escucha los sentimientos y preocupaciones del otro sobre un cierto problema antes de intentar de resolver problemas. Estudia y modifica soluciones acordadas después de una breve prueba de una o dos semanas.

Evita la intensificación de conflictos acordando de antemano maneras de hacerse señales para detener las disputas no productivas. Ayúdense a identificar temas y patrones de comunicación que tienden a intensificar la rabia. Si esto sucede, hagan una pausa y pónganse de acuerdo para resumir la discusión en un momento preciso cuando ambos estén más tranquilos.

Poner estos enfoques en práctica disminuirá el estrés en su relación, realzará sus sentimientos de habilidad, y disminuirá la sensación inevitable de no tener control y de estar avasallados que incluso los padres más organizados y confiados pueden sentir.

### Maneje su Tiempo Realistamente

Una de las fuentes más grandes de estrés para las parejas es manejar el tiempo realistamente. Los bebés interrumpen los planes y horarios más bien diseñados. Puede que duerman la siesta más de lo que se esperaba, necesiten un cambio de pañales y ropa justo cuando estás a punto de salir de la casa, o se ponen malhumorados o les da hambre. Pero existen soluciones.

Donde sea posible hace planes flexibles. Esto significa la planificación de alternativas en vez de acatar un plan que no puede ser cumplido, y alertar a la familia y amigos que puede ser necesario hacer cambios. Por ejemplo, cuando te inviten a una cena familiar, dile a tu familia de antemano que empiecen a comer sin ti si estas atrasada. Comprométete a llamar lo antes posible si crees que tienes que cambiar de planes, pero deja en claro que por ahora, las necesidades del bebé están ante todo.

Toma el tiempo para discutir con tu pareja de antemano cualquier duda que tengas sobre los planes acordados. Viajes largos en automóvil pueden ser más difíciles de lo contemplado. Discutir las preocupaciones sobre esos viajes de antemano disminuirá las tensiones y te permitirá modificar los planes sensatamente y tendrá como resultado mucho menos desilusiones para todos.

Comparte información con el otro sobre cambios en el horario de trabajo. Nunca supongas que esto no tendrá efecto sobre el cónyuge que está en la casa con el bebé. Consigue ayuda para cuidar al bebé cuando tienes trabajo o citas que deben ser atendidas a una hora fija.

### Encuentra Fuentes de Apoyo

Otro importante estrés para los nuevos padres pueden ser las distintas opiniones sobre la necesidad de ayuda externa en el hogar, y sobre quien sería ayuda apropiada para cuidar el bebé. Las parejas tienen que estar dispuestas a pedir ayuda. Sin embargo, involucrar a los abuelos o a otros familiares puede tener como resultado que uno o ambos cónyuges se sientan en deuda o molestos. En algunas familias, esto puede causar que aparezcan algunos viejos problemas. Discuta las preocupaciones de antemano y decida conjuntamente si la ayuda ofrecida será un apoyo o causará tensiones en la pareja o en el resto de la familia.

Asimismo, las preocupaciones financieras sobre el cuidado de niños deben ser consideradas cuidadosamente en cuanto a los costos y beneficios emocionales tanto como financieros.

### Los Bebés Causan la Disminución de la Disponibilidad Hacia el Otro

La presencia física y emocional del cónyuge cambia drásticamente con la llegada de un bebé. Cada cónyuge desarrolla una relación con el bebé, y esto, a veces, puede dejar a la otra persona sintiéndose dejada a un lado o abandonada. La inversión emocional y la preocupación con el bebé es un proceso necesario para que se desarrolle el afecto, pero puede dejarte con poca energía para poder satisfacer las necesidades emocionales de tu pareja. La fatiga, que siempre parece acompañar la llegada de un nuevo bebé, también puede limitar la disponibilidad del cónyuge hacia el otro.

Las demandas laborales también pueden limitar el tiempo disponible y la inversión en la relación de pareja. Cuando un padre se queda en la casa con el bebé, el otro cónyuge puede que aumente las horas en el trabajo para suplementar los ingresos. Esto puede dejar a la persona que se queda con el bebé en la casa sintiéndose sin apoyo, aislado del contacto con adultos, e incluso abandonado por su pareja. Y la persona que trabaja puede sentirse herida, no apreciada y enojada.

Cuando ambos padres trabajan, manejar la logística de las responsabilidades del hogar, el bebé y el trabajo, y también la ambivalencia y culpabilidad del tiempo que están lejos del niño pueden dejar a la pareja con poca energía, ganas, o tiempo para dedicarle a su relación entre si.

### Date el Tiempo Para Sustentar tu Relación

Las parejas frecuentemente sienten que son bueno padres, pero echan de menos el tiempo íntimo juntos, el contacto sexual, o simplemente compartir intereses u opiniones que no se centran sobre el niño. Fije momentos regulares para la pareja, incluso si esto solo

implica una pequeña caminata o tomarse una taza de café. Muchas parejas creen que esto ayuda a preservar la sensación de todavía ser una pareja de adultos tanto como ser parte de una nueva familia de tres.

Si darse el tiempo para estar juntos, por lo menos al principio, parece demasiado difícil, encuentra maneras de hacerle saber a tu pareja que la tienes en mente y así sustentar la parte no paternal de tu relación. Toma un minuto unas pocas veces al día para darle un abrazo, escribirle una nota de amor, traerle a la casa tu comida favorita, o llamar a tu pareja por teléfono.

La transición hacia ser padre es un evento significativo en la relación de una pareja. Transforma su vínculo a uno que nunca puede ser completamente roto. Puede ser una fuente de alegría, y puede ofrecer una oportunidad para crecer, pero también es un estrés importante. Cuidar su propia relación ayudará a la pareja a continuar a cumplir las demandas físicas y emocionales de ser padres.

Cuando una pareja puede encontrar maneras de mejorar la comunicación, aumentar el apoyo mutuo, y nutrir los aspectos positivos de su relación, el estrés de ser padre de un recién nacido puede ser minimizado. Lo más importante es escucharse a si mismos, expresar respeto por distintas opiniones y enfoques, y tratar de evitar la intensificación de los conflictos. Cuando las parejas enfocan en apoyarse a si mismos y recalcar las cosas que los aproximan, mejoran su capacidad de ser padres y también se aseguran que su relación como pareja siga siendo una fuente de alegría tanto como el nuevo bebe

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NEWSLETTER

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# Family Narratives

## *The Stories We Tell Our Children*

Mother: Do you remember when Austin came to stay, and Dorothy and Uncle Nick? And where did we go? Did we go to the train station, Hamish? Did we go to the station and see the trains, the puffer trains?

• Child (19 mos. old): Na na [attentive, listening to Mother]

• Mother: Puff puff ah. Is that what they did? And did we wave bye bye to them on the train when they went home? They went home to Gore didn't they? And we go bye bye, say bye bye Uncle Nick, bye bye Dorothy. Did we? And what did the train say?

• Child: Brr brr.

• Mother: Oh, do you remember? Was it a big blue train like Thomas?

This exchange between mother and child illustrates a curious thing that we do: We try to engage children in a discussion about past events even if they are not yet be able to contribute much to the conversation. This process of reminiscing with our children about shared events creates a common family narrative.

What are family narratives? They're the stories we tell of our every-day lives. Many of us do it without even realizing it. It might be discussing the details of a soccer game while driving in the car; talking about an interaction with a teacher at the dinner table; or even a more ritualized occasion such as toasting a bride and groom with a story of their first date. Whatever the situation, we are offering our thoughts and feelings about a shared event that links us as a family.

### From Toddlerhood On

Some parents begin doing this with children as young as 18 months old. Of course, parents provide most of the content with very young children because children are so limited in their ability to talk about the past. At 18 months, they can only make references to very recent events (such as, "all gone" to describe a cookie that has been eaten). However, reminiscing with them provides an important introduction to the more involved version we will do as they get older.

Throughout the preschool years children will begin to participate more and more. Around twenty to twenty-four months of age children may begin to make references to the past. Early attempts to do this might be something like "berries" to refer to breakfast that morning. As they develop, children may string a few words together to talk about a past event, such as, "airplane to Grandma's."

Between two and two and one half years of age, children are usually able to respond to direct questions about the past. For example:

• Parent: What animals did we see at the zoo?

• Child: Giraffe

• Parent: Yes, we saw a giraffe and what about those birds you liked, the ones that look like they

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are wearing little suits?
• Child: Penguins
• Parent: That's right and what were the penguins doing?
• Child: Jumping
• Parent: Yes, they were jumping up and down in the water weren't they?

A bit later on, starting as early as 3 years of age, many children are able to give organized and detailed accounts of past experiences.

• Parent: What animals did we see at the zoo?
• Child: Giraffe, and he was eating leaves, and a big lion and two monkeys.
• Parent: Yes, and what were the monkeys eating?
• Child: Bananas and one was swinging.

## Functions of Family Narratives

So, why do we do it? According to research by Dr. Robyn Fivush at Emory University in Atlanta, there are many reasons why reminiscing with your children is important. There are several skills that children practice and develop when they participate in family reminiscing. Language skills and memory skills might be the most obvious. Children also develop an understanding of the concept of time and learn how to organize information.

Talking about a family vacation from several months ago will help children put time in perspective when they think about how long that has been and what things have occurred in the meantime. Remembering the events of the vacation and using cues from their parents will hone children's memory skills.

Organization is important for developing a coherent narrative. By listening to others tell a story and by telling their own stories, children learn and practice the important aspects of organization.

### A Beach Vignette

**It was pretty hot that summer morning.**
**She pulled into the parking field and, as she stepped from the car, she could feel the already-hot pavement through the thin soles of her sandals.**
**She carefully lifted little Joey from his safety seat in the back of the car.**
**Grabbing her tote bag, holding Joey close to her, she walked across the parking field to the pathway in the sand.**
**Slowly, slowly struggling across the soft, shifting sand she made her way to the edge of the water.**
**Throwing down the tote she walked toward the churning waves - holding her little son lightly in her arms - a seagull circled lazily overhead.**
**Gently, gently she leaned forward - just close enough so that Joey's tiny toes touched the icy waves.**
**He splashed his feet against the water with a "slap, splat" sound - the circling gull a silent witness.**
**"This is the ocean, Joey" she whispered against his ear.**
**"This is the beautiful ocean and it touches every part of the earth."**
**Joey giggled softly, his mother's whispering breath tickling his ear.**
**"He's still too young to understand" she thought.**
**But he *was not* too young to remember this moment when his toes first touched the ocean and his mother held him close to her heart.**

***Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour***

Fivush also feels there are important social reasons to reminisce with your family. "Children are creating shared histories which will help them to maintain emotional bonds within a family."

When families reminisce they do not simply recall a sequence of events, they also include information about how they felt, often evaluating and reinterpreting what happened into a larger context.

Participating in the creation of a shared family history teaches children their place in the family as well as their place in the world. Interacting and evaluating past interactions helps them to understand the complex social network that defines who they are.

"The emotional aspects in family reminiscing are particularly interesting because it is the emotions that we feel about past experiences that really define those experiences for ourselves. Not only did this happen, but this is the way I felt about it. Not only do I talk about you being part of my experience, but I talk about how I feel about you. Emotions are the way to link ourselves to our experiences and ourselves to other people," says Fivush.

Talking about the past also gives children a sense of placement in time and an understanding of their passage through time. They were different in the past and will be different in the future. For example, many children love to hear the story of their birth. Listening to such narratives allows them to view themselves from the perspective of others and helps them to define their social context. It also challenges them to consider a time when they were very different from the way they are now – a time that they cannot remember.

Children are also learning about how to conceptualize themselves within that family. For example, 'Who am I?' 'What kind of experiences have I had?' 'How do I relate to other people?' and 'How do my past experiences help me understand who I am today?' Talking about the death of a family pet and how each family member reacted may help children define their own emotional reaction as well as create bonds within the family by identifying shared feelings.

## Narrative Style

We do not all talk to our children in the same way. In her

research, Fivush has discovered some interesting differences which have important influences on children's development. One way in which we differ is how elaborative we are when we talk.

Some parents talk often about past events, and include many details. These highly elaborative parents also prompt their children by asking a variety of questions about an event, each time adding new information about what occurred. It is as if the parent is trying to jog the memory of the child, hoping to hit on the right detail that will spark a memory, as in the following example:

- Mother: And what else happened at the celebrations?
- Child: I don't know.
- Mother: We did something special with all the other children.
- Child: What was it?
- Mother: There was a whole lot of people over at the beach, and everyone was doing something in the sand.
- Child: What was it?
- Mother: Can't you remember what we did in the sand? We were looking for something.
- Child: Umm, I don't know.
- Mother: We went digging in the sand.
- Child: Umm, and that was when um the yellow spade broke.
- Mother: Good girl, I'd forgotten that. Yes, the yellow spade broke, and what happened?
- Child: Um, we had to um dig with the other end of the yellow bit one.
- Mother: That's right. We used the broken bit, didn't we?
- Child: Yeah.

In contrast, less elaborative parents ask fewer and more redundant questions, basically just repeating the same questions without adding any new information. Less elaborative parents give little help to the child and the conversation comes across more as a test of specific knowledge rather than an effort to elicit memory. The following example illustrates this type of conversation:

- Mother: Do you remember the fireworks?
- Child: Yeah.
- Mother: What can you tell me about those?
- Child: Um, made a light and then they fell. Then there was a blue one.
- Mother: Mmmhmm.
- Child: And how did they finish?
- Mother: I don't know. You tell me.
- Child: I don't know.
- Mother: Oh.
- Child: Can you remember?
- Mother: I remember the fireworks, yeah.

This difference in narrative style is important. Fivush and colleagues found that children's reminiscing style often mimics their parent's style. Parents who give more details and who include more evaluations of an event have children that do the same. As a result, children of highly elaborative parents are often better able to remember and recount their experiences in an organized and detailed way.

Moreover, this ability to tell elaborated narratives was found to be related to children's literacy in school. The practice they had at home likely gives them some basics in narrative language skill and vocabulary.

Family narrative style was also related to their social and emotional development. Families who reminisce in more elaborative ways also displayed more secure parent-child emotional relationships. For these families, elaborative narratives may not only create a strong family identity but a positive and fun situation as well in which individuals are willingly sharing with each other.

## Gender Differences

Fivush has also uncovered some interesting gender differences. Mothers tend to be more elaborative and also talk more about emotions than fathers. Additionally, both parents talk about the past more with daughters than with sons. They also talk in more elaborative ways with daughters, eliciting more memory contributions and giving them more feedback.

Parents also differ in the type of information they talk about with daughters versus sons; they talk more about people and relationships with daughters than with sons. Finally, mothers and fathers include more emotional information, especially sadness, when speaking to a daughter.

These differences in parental style seem to influence children's understanding of narratives. Girls apparently learn that emotions are an important part of narratives, and by the end of the preschool years they will talk more about emotions when recalling past events than boys.

The most striking

discovery is that gender differences can be seen as early as 3 years of age. At that young age, girls provide longer and richer reports of their own past experiences and talk more about people and relationships than boys.

"The differences are somewhat surprising to me," Fivush said. "They follow along gender stereotypes but it was interesting to see them so clearly in these family stories."

While many families are struggling to keep up with their busy schedules it is important to recognize the value of simply talking to each other. Family reminiscing has far reaching effects not only on our children's cognitive development but also on their social development and sense of place in the world. Our children learn many things through example. They pay attention to what their parents do and the way that they do it. Giving your children good examples to follow will provide them with a foundation from which they can learn and grow.

***Rachel Robertson, B.S. is a freelance writer in Atlanta, Ga. who has worked in psychology research for 15 years. She recently assisted with a family narratives project directed by Dr. Fivush.***

## What's Your Narrative Style?

What kind of reminiscing do you do with your child? Do you embellish the conversation with details? Do you praise and encourage your child's participation in reminiscing? Do you provide an evaluation of the events? Do you use new information in your questions to prompt your child's memory? If so, you are probably have a more elaborative narrative style with your child.

Or do you speak about the past very little? When you reminisce, do you use very few details? Do you repeat the same question until you get the answer you are looking for? These are the characteristics of a less elaborative style.

# Dear Reader...

Did you ever notice that parents keep up a steady stream of conversation with youngsters even when the children are far too young to participate? We ask them questions as if they could supply answers. When they get older, we help them to think of the answers.

All this chatting with our kids builds bonds, exercises cognitive faculties, and teaches kids how to communicate. The research is by Robyn Fivush, Ph.D. and Rachel Robertson tells us about it in her article *Family Narratives - The Stories We Tell Our Children.*

We also have a summertime round-up of places to have fun and learn about the history of our country. Then, there's the Craft Corner, children's books, and more.

Finally, we have some exciting news here at P&p headquarters! We're doing a book called *P&p On Kids.* It's the topics you've found most helpful, and the information that's been most valuable: academic skills, emotional development, parenting issues, discipline, our own emotional issues as parents, and much, much more. We'll have more information in the coming months.

Enjoy the summer and we'll see you when we return in September.

Heide Schwartzberg

## Talking to Kids Promotes Learning

Adults everyday language makes a difference in children's ability to understand complex sentences. When faced with "The boy is looking for the girl behind a chair, but she is sitting under the table," children who hear complex sentences in home and in school are better able to understand the meaning.

Research at the University of Chicago discovered that children in preschool classes are better able to use their own complex sentences and understand those of others when they have teachers who use these multi-clause sentences in speaking with them.

When adults use complex sentences to talk to children, the children learn how to understand and decode complex sentences.

Janellen Huttenlocher, Ph.D. and her colleagues went into 40 classrooms in 17 different preschools in the Chicago area. The three- and four-year-olds were given language comprehension tests at the beginning and at the end of the school year. In addition, the researchers observed and recorded the teachers' speech during the middle of the year.

"Our findings indicate that the greater the proportion of complex syntactic forms a child hears, the greater will be his or her ability to use these forms," Huttenlocker said in an interview released by the University of Chicago News Office.

This doesn't mean that biological factors are unimportant, but it does remind us that adults can help children develop complex, rich language.

*This research was published in Cognitive Psychology, November, 2002 and the results reported in a news release by the University of Chicago News Office.*

# Kids Crafts

Enjoy the lazy, hazy days of summer by indulging your little ones sense of adventure with art projects designed to inspire creativity. Crafts help kids approach life with more spontaneity and imagination. This playful exploration boosts competence and fosters a myriad of skills while being entertaining, the key to young children's learning. Through this process children learn to view the world as a place filled with possibilities, one where they can shape and express their vision.

Have a cool, crafty summer and beat the boredom blues by trying these simple but satisfying hands-on projects.

## Marker Magic

You will need: Water spray bottle; Water; Washable Magic markers; Water Color paper

What kid doesn't love "magic"? This " cool" activity will ignite the creative spirit in your child as their designs blend to make bursts of color. Have your child begin by making designs on the paper using the markers. Encourage them to be inventive and experiment with different shapes and lines. Let them decide how much time and effort they want to put into their artistic efforts. Next they can mist their original designs and discover shapes as the water works its magic. See how the pattern changes as your child sprays different parts of the paper. It's so fascinating to observe it's likely your child will want to make more than one.

✿ *Alternative*: Have your child make designs and then use a large wet paintbrush to "paint" and help transform an ordinary drawing into something extraordinary. See if your child can discover some summer critters and add details upon drying.

## Pretty As A Posy Prints

You will need: Flat flowers like pansies, buttercups, and ferns; Interesting leaves; Tempera paint; Good quality paper.

Begin by taking a nature walk to collect some signs of summer. Save those summer blooms to make charming prints that will be a welcome reminder of the season when it's below freezing. Have your child arrange them in a pleasing motif on the paper. Carefully secure the flowers with a dab of glue or tape. Then prompt him/her to paint the paper right over the flowers and leaves creating a print that will enhance your child's sense of design and texture while developing an appreciation for nature too. Allow to dry thoroughly then remove the flowers and discover a print that is pretty as a posy.

## Bubble Blast

You will need: Bubble making solution; Bubble pipe; Powered tempera paints; Old flour sifter; Large white paper.

This is an enchanting activity that will tickle your child's fancy and it might just tickle your fancy as well. Start by spreading large sheets of paper onto a table. Sift several tablespoons of the powered paint over the paper. Have your child blow bubbles directly onto the paper transforming the powdered paint into delightful designs. As your child allows the bubbles to drift onto the paper the colors of the paints will blend to create lovely rainbows.

Depending on the size and shape of the bubbles each design will be unique and interesting. Encourage your child to be whimsical and experiment with it.

## A Special Necklace

You will need: Large uncooked macaroni like rigatoni or ziti; Red and blue food coloring (or the colors of your national flag); White paint (optional); String or ribbon; Sealable plastic storage bags

Capture your children's imagination and interest in their country with this simple necklace that they can wear to celebrate national holidays. Start by placing several drops of food coloring in each bag. Make a separate bag for each color. Add several pieces of pasta. Seal the bag. Then have your child shake the bag until the pasta is completely covered with the food coloring. Take several more pasta pieces and paint them white (optional). Spread the macaroni on paper towels to dry. Once completely dry have your child thread the string through the pasta and tie into a circle. Then this wonderful necklace is ready to wear. Your child will be delighted to show off this handiwork and to be a part of their nation's celebrations.

*Dawn Marie Barbyte*

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# Hands-On History for Children

✈ **Bent's Old Fort National Historical Site**; Colorado

This reconstruction of an adobe fort and trading post from 1845 depicts life on the Santa Fe Trail. Costumed interpreters demonstrate life during the days of the mountain men.

Visitors can walk the fort's ramparts, visit the blacksmith shop, trading center, and trappers' quarters.
For more information:
(719) 383-5010
www.nps.gov/beol

✈ **Calico**; California

Visit this partially recreated, partially original old mining town. Tours examine the life of miners, explore a silver mine, and ride a narrow gauge railroad. Calico is a registered California historic monument. For more information: (800) TO-CALICO
www.calicotown.com

✈ **Canterbury Shaker Village**; New Hampshire

Explore 25 of the original Shaker buildings of this utopian community. There's a meeting house, dwellings, carriage house, laundry and more. The Village interprets 200 years of Shaker life through guided tours, demonstrations, activities, and events. There's also a restaurant, bakery, and museum gift store. For more information:
(603) 783-9511
www.shakers.org

✈ **Conner Prairie**; Indiana

Prairietown is a created village with costumed interpreters portraying life in 1836 in Indiana and the Old Northwest. The Lenape (pronounced *"luh-NAH-pay"*) Indian Camp and McKinnen's Trading Post is a reproduction log cabin trading post, five Delaware (Lenape) wigwams, a woodland path, and garden. For more information:
(800) 966-1839
www.connerprairie.org

✈ **Festival Park**; North Carolina

Discover daily life on a 16th-century ship, play in an interactive museum, and enjoy a variety of performing and visual arts. Elizabeth II is a representative 16th-century sailing ship, complete with sailors dressed in period garments and speaking Elizabethan dialect.
For more information:
(252) 475-1500
http://www.roanokeisland.com/

✈ **George Ranch**; Texas

At this working cattle ranch, visitors can watch, as well as participate, in seasonal activities. A sharecropper's farm depicts the life of black sharecroppers after the Civil War. For more information:
(281) 343-0218
www.georgeranch.org

✈ **Jamestown Settlement**; Virginia

Learn about the founding of Jamestown and the native American Indians through a Powhatan village, a colonial fort, and representations of the three ships that landed in 1607. Historical interpreters discuss and demonstrate the Powhatan life, and crew the ships. For more information:
(888) 593-4682
www.historyisfun.org/index.html

✈ **Laura Plantation**; Louisiana

This historic sugar plantation was built in 1805. Guided tours introduce Louisiana's Creole culture detailing 250 years of true-life stories of Creole women, slaves, and children. The plantation includes 11 historic buildings on the National Register. There's also a self-guided visit of the plantation homestead including animal barns, slave cabins, and overseer cottages. For more information:
(888) 799-7690
www.lauraplantation.com

✈ **Mystic Seaport**; Connecticut

The largest maritime museum in North America with replicas of traditional wooden boats, as well as an antique steamboat. The 40-acre property includes a waterfront with berthed ships and historic buildings. Interpreters demonstrate life at the time. For more information:
(888) 9SEAPORT
www.visitmysticseaport.com

✈ **Old Bethpage Village Restoration**; New York

Stroll through 19th century Long Island and talk with costumed interpreters sharing their knowledge and skills.

There are 51 historic buildings and seven reconstructions on the 200 acres; including an inn, homes, stores, craftspeople at work, the one-room schoolhouse, church, and a farm where livestock are tended.
For more information:
(516) 572-8400
www.oldbethpage.org/

✈ **Old World Wisconsin**; Wisconsin

Farm and village life re-created by costumed interpreters. Farmers work the fields with antique farm implements using teams of oxen and horses. Women and children work on chores that change with the season. Farmsteads and settlements representing German, Finnish, Norwegian, Danish, Polish, Yankee, and African-American pioneers can be seen.
For more information:
(262) 594-6300
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/sites/oww

✈ **Stuhr Museum**; Nebraska

The Pioneer Settlement interprets the 1850s-60s "road ranches" that were built along the pioneer trails and served travelers heading west with places where travelers could pause to buy provisions and make repairs on equipment. Railroad Town features the life and times of the prairie town builders of the 1890s. The Pawnee Earth Lodge is filled with authentic items for visitors to experience lodge life.
For more information:
(308) 385-5316
www.stuhrmuseum.org

*Neala Schwartzberg* is the editor of *Parent & preschooler* and an avid traveler.

# It's Summer Now - But It Will Soon Be Time for School!

Long summer days, melting into fun-filled late summer nights - this is the time of the year when we lose track of schedules and throw off the bonds of winter, filling our days with thoughts of vacations. But, before we know it, it will be September and time to get back to school.

This year may be the year your little ones start school or daycare programs so it's time to think about helping them get the very best start. Going to school or daycare is a big change for preschoolers. Their definition of "life" is going to take on many new facets. Parents can help their children deal with these new challenges by helping them get ready for their new schedules. After a summer of staying up late and waking whenever they wanted, kids need to re-adjust their sleep schedules before the first day of school arrives. Parents should start preparing children for early morning schedules at least two weeks prior to the big day. This will insure that kids are ready, well-rested, awake, and in an optimum condition to begin learning.

While individual sleep needs vary, the amount of sleep suggested by sleep experts for elementary and pre-school students is at least 10 to 12 hours (and remember to add in at least 10-15 minutes of "falling asleep time" to that calculation). A bedtime preceded by at least 10 minutes of calming, soothing activities helps little ones get ready for sleep. Plan quiet time and establish "getting ready to sleep" rituals such as brushing teeth, story time, or any other gentle, calming activity.

Remember to maintain good sleeping conditions such as a quiet, well-ventilated room that is dark enough and has a comfortable sleeping temperature. According to the Better Sleep Council, the ideal temperature for sleep is around 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. And remember: a comfortable and supportive mattress maximizes chances for sound, restful sleep.

Parents can help kids get ready for the school experience in many ways such as visiting the school before the first day and talking with kids about what they can expect, and, of course, helping them to start their school life rested and ready!

↳ Information for this article was taken from information available from the Medical Society of New York. For other health-related material, contact your physician or your local county medical society.

*Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour*

# A Special Honor for Mister Rogers

Fred Rogers, the creator and host of Public television's "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," has recently had an asteroid named in his honor. The International Astronomical Union names comets, asteroids, and surface features such as moon craters after individuals. These honors cannot be bought and they are based on the merits of an individual's life as judged by a distinguished panel of astronomers.

"Misterrogers", formerly known as No. 26858, is an asteroid that has been named in honor of the television personality who died on February 27th at the age of 74. "Misterrogers" can be found between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter and is located approximately 218 million miles from the sun. It was discovered in 1993 by E.F. Helin at the Palomar Observatory in California.

The announcement of this honor was made on May 1st by John G. Radzilowicz, director of the Henry Buhl Jr. Planetarium & Observatory at the Carnegie Science Center. The Science Center had worked with Family Communications, Inc., Rogers' production company, to produce a planetarium show for preschoolers called "the Sky Above Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." This show now plays at fifteen planetariums across the country. For information on this show, log on to **www.space.com**.

# Reminder:
## *Time for Immunizations for School*

It's August and pediatricians' offices are filled with parents and their kids who need vaccinations in order to begin day care, preschool, and kindergarten. It's important for parents to consult with their physicians who can give them information about required immunization schedules to ensure that children get the vaccinations they need.

State laws about immunizations change so it is important for parents to be aware of what immunizations are required in the state in which they live. New York State, for example, in recent years has required immunizations against polio, diphtheria, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, and Hib (H. *influenzae* type b). The immunization requirements often change within a state so parents can contact their local medical society for more information. Many states now require immunizations against chicken pox (for kids born on or after 1-1-2000) and some states also require testing for lead. Most child care centers and schools can provide information to parents about lead testing and can also sometimes offer a referral to a center that does this testing.

↳ Contact your local medical society for more information on this and other health-related topics. This information comes from the Medical Society of the State of New York.

*Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour*

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# library resources

## Family Stories

Regardless of how your babies came into your lives, there's always a story.

📖 ***The Best Single Mom in the World: How I was adopted*** by Mary Zisk; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, IL; 2001; Hardcover $14.95. A young girl and her mother take turns telling the story of the overseas adoption. The girl notes that sometimes she'd like a dad in her life but that her grandfather and her friend's dad are there to help and listen. Bright, colorful illustrations and a upbeat text.

📖 ***How I Was Adopted*** by Joanna Cole; Mulberry Books (William Morrow & Company); New York; 1995; Softcover $5.95. Samantha talks about her adoption and brings the reading child into the process by asking questions including at the end "Do you know how you were adopted?" Contains a Note to Families about the book and about raising an adopted child.

📖 ***I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*** by Rose Lewis; illustrated by Jane Dyer; Little Brown and Company; Boston; 2003; Boardbook $6.99. A mother tells the story of how she adopted her baby. "Once upon a time in China there was a baby girl who lived in a big room with lots of other babies." Lyric writing and beautiful illustrations.

📖 ***Just the Two of Us*** by Will Smith; illustrations by Kadir Nelson; Scholastic Press; New York; 2001; Hardcover $16.95. Written by the actor Will Smith in rap, this is a rare book about a father pledging his life to his son. "From the first time the doctor placed you in my arms I knew I'd meet death before I'd let you meet harm." The illustrations are luminous magic. It also includes Smith's affirming dedication to his parents for how they raised him.

📖 ***Mommy Far, Mommy Near: An adoption story*** by Carol Antoinette Peacock; illustrated by Shawn Costello Brownell; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, IL; 2002; Hardcover. This story of a Chinese adoption talks about the little girl's feeling of being different and even abandoned by her birth mother, as well as the love she and her adopted mother feel. It's tender and touching and acknowledges a very real potential problem. Warm and loving illustrations.

📖 ***Our Gracie Aunt*** by Jacqueline Woodson; illustrations by Jon J. Muth; Jump at the Sun (Hyperion Books for Children); New York; 2002; Hardcover $15.99. Johnson and Beebee are two children who have been left alone by their mother many times before, as she struggles unsuccessfully to put her own life in order. Finally the children are brought to their Aunt Gracie who they have never met. The book explores the children's worry and sense of loss as well as their gradual trust.

📖 ***Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born*** by Jamie Lee Curtis; illustrated by Laura Cornell; Joanna Cutler Books (Harper Collins Publishers); New York; 1999; Boardbook $6.95. Now out as a boardbook with little hands to hold and read, it's the retelling of the story of how the little girl was born to one loving mother who couldn't keep her and adopted by other parents who lovingly raise her. In this adoption story the adoptive parents are there at the birth. Light-hearted tone and whimsical illustrations.

## Special Book

**July 4th**
**America's Birthday**

📖 ***I Pledge Allegiance*** by Bill Martin Jr and Michael Sampson; illustrated by Chris Raschka; Candlewick Press; Cambridge, MA; 2002; Hardcover $15.99. The pledge of allegiance is often said, but rarely understood by children. This book explains the meaning and purpose starting with the word *pledge* "pledge is a promise" and ending with *all* "all Americans have the right to be treated fairly by our laws." With liberty and justice for all. The words still ring true today.

### moving ???

Please remember to let us know when you do. Send your **old and new** addresses to: P&pN; NSC&FGC; 480 Old Westbury Rd.; Roslyn Hgts., NY 11577-2215.

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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

PP Parent and preschooler

# NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

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# Narraciones de Familia

## *Los Cuentos que les Contamos a Nuestro Niños*

Mamá: ¿Te acuerdas cuando Arturo vino a quedarse con Dorotea y el tío Nicolás? ¿Y a donde fuimos? ¿Fuimos a la estación de ferrocarril, Alberto? Fuimos a la estación y vimos los trenes, ¿los trenes a vapor? Niño (de19 meses): Na na (con atención, escuchando a la madre). Mamá: Puf puf ah. ¿Eso fue lo que hicieron? ¿Y nosotros nos despedimos de ellos en el tren con la mano cuando se fueron a casa? ¿Volvieron a su casa en Gora, no? Y nosotros dijimos adiós adiós, digan adiós tío Nicolás, adiós adiós Dorotea. ¿No es así? ¿Y qué dijo el tren?
Niño: Brr brr.
Mamá: ¿Te Acuerdas? ¿Era un gran tren azul como Tomás?

Este intercambio entre madre e hijo ilustra una cosa curiosa que siempre hacemos: tratamos de involucrar a los niños en una discusión sobre eventos del pasado incluso cuando ellos aun no pueden contribuir mucho a la conversación. Este proceso de reminiscencias con nuestros hijos sobre momentos compartidos crean una narrativa familiar común.

¿Qué son las narraciones familiares? Son los cuentos que contamos sobre nuestras vidas cotidianas. Muchos de nosotros lo hacemos sin damos cuenta. Puede ser al discutir los detalles de un partido de fútbol mientras estamos en el automóvil; conversando sobre una discusión con la maestra en la mesa de comer; o incluso en situaciones más rituales, como cuando hacemos un brindis por la novia y el novio con un relato sobre la primera vez que se conocieron. Cualquiera sea la situación, estamos planteando nuestros pensamientos y sentimientos sobre un evento compartido que nos vincula como familia.

Desde Niños Pequeños
Algunos padres empiezan a hacer esto con niños de solo 18 meses. Evidentemente, los padres ponen la mayoría del contenido con niños tan pequeños porque estas criaturas están muy limitadas en su habilidad de hablar sobre el pasado. A los 18 meses, sólo pueden referirse a eventos muy recientes (como, "se acabo" al describir una galleta que ha sido comida). Sin embargo, recordar con ellos da una importante introducción a la versión más complicada que realizaremos cuando tengan más edad.

A través de los años preescolares los niños empezarán a participar más y más. Alrededor de los 20 a 24 meses, los niños pueden empezar a hacer referencias al pasado. Los primeros intentos de hacer referencias al pasado pueden ser algo como "fresas" al referirse al desayuno de la mañana. A medida de que se desarrollan, los niños quizás hilen unas pocas palabras para hablar de un evento en el pasado, como "avión a abuelita".

Entre los dos y dos años y medio los niños generalmente pueden responder a preguntas directas sobre el pasado. Por ejemplo:
Padre: ¿Qué animales vimos en el zoológico?
Niño: Jirafa
Padre: Si, vimos una jirafa y ¿te acuerdas de esos pájaros que te gustaron, los que parecían que tenían pequeños trajes?
Niño: Pingüinos
Padre: Si, ¿y qué estaban haciendo los pingüinos?
Niño: Saltando.
Padre: Si, estaban saltando dentro y fuera del agua, ¿no es así?

Un poco más adelante, comenzando tan tempranamente como los tres años, muchos niños pueden hacer relatos detallados y organizados de sus experiencias pasadas.
Padre: ¿Qué animales vimos en el zoológico?
Niño: Jirafa, y estaba comiendo hojas, y un gran león y dos monos.
Padre: Si, ¿y qué estaban comiendo los monos?

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Niño: Bananos, y uno estaba saltando,

## Las Funciones de las Narraciones Familiares

¿Entonces, por qué lo hacemos? De acuerdo a las investigaciones del Dr. Robyn Fivush de la Universidad de Emory en Atlanta, hay muchas razones por lo cual es importante hacer reminiscencias con los niños. Hay varias habilidades que los niños practican y desarrollan cuando participan en las reminiscencias familiares. Las habilidades de lenguaje y de memoria son las más evidentes. Los niños también desarrollan una comprensión del concepto del tiempo y aprenden a como organizar el tiempo.

Conversar sobre una vacación familiar de hace varios meses atrás le ayudará a los niños a poner el perspectiva cuando piensan cuanto tiempo ha pasado y que cosas han pasado durante el inter tanto. Recordar los eventos de la vacación y el uso de pistas de sus padres afinarán las habilidades de memoria del niño. La organización es importante para desarrollar una narración coherente. Al escuchar a otros hacer una narración y al hacer su propia narración, los niños aprenden y practican los aspectos importantes de la organización.

Fivush también cree que hay importantes razones sociales para hacer reminiscencias con tu familia. "Los niños están creando historias compartidas que los ayudarán a mantener vínculos emocionales dentro de la familia".

Cuando las familias hacen reminiscencias no solo recuerdan una secuencia de eventos, también incluyen información sobre que sentían, a menudo evaluando y reinterpretando que pasó en un contexto más amplio.

Participar en la creación de una historia familiar compartida le enseña a los niños su lugar en la familia tanto como su posición en el mundo. Interactuar y la evaluación de interacciones pasadas les ayuda a comprender la compleja red social que define quienes son.

"Los aspectos emocionales relacionados a las reminiscencias familiares son especialmente interesantes porque son las emociones que sentimos sobre nuestras experiencias pasadas las que realmente definen esas experiencias para nosotros. No solo esto pasó, sino esta es la manera que lo siento. No solo hablo sobre que tu eres parte de mi experiencia, sino que hablo sobre lo que siento por ti. Las emociones son las manera de vinculamos a nuestras experiencias y a nosotros con otra gente", dice Fivush.

Hablar sobre el pasado también le da a los niños un sentimiento de su lugar en el tiempo y una comprensión de su paso por el tiempo. Ellos eran distintos en el pasado y serán distintos en el futuro. Por ejemplo, a muchos niños les encanta escuchar el relato de su nacimiento. Escuchar esas narraciones les permite verse desde la perspectiva de otros y los ayuda a definir su contexto social. También los desafía a considerar una época cuando eran muy distintos de la manera en que son ahora –un tiempo que no pueden recordar.

Los niños también están aprendiendo a como considerarse dentro de esa familia. Por ejemplo, ¿"Quien soy"? "¿Qué tipo de experiencias he tenido?" ¿"Cómo me relaciono a otra gente"? y ¿"Cómo mis experiencias del pasado me ayudan a comprender quien soy ahora"? Conversar sobre la muerte de una mascota familiar y como cada miembro de la familia reaccionó puede ayudar a los niños a definir sus propias reacciones emocionales y al mismo tiempo crear vínculos dentro de la familia al identificar sentimientos compartidos.

## Estilo Narrativo

No todos les hablamos a nuestros niños de la misma manera. En sus investigaciones, Fivush ha descubierto algunas diferencias importantes que tienen fundamental influencia en el desarrollo de nuestros hijos. Una manera en que somos distintos es cuanto nos explayamos cuando hablamos.

Algunos padres frecuentemente hablan sobre eventos del pasado e incluyen muchos detalles. Estos padres que se explayan en detalle también instan a sus niños haciendo un sinnúmero de preguntas sobre un episodio, cada vez agregando nueva información sobre lo que ocurrió. Es como si el padre estuviera tratando de refrescarle la memoria al niño, con la esperanza de encontrar el detalle preciso que desatará un recuerdo, como en el siguiente ejemplo:

Madre: ¿Y qué otra cosa pasó en la celebración?
Niño: No sé.
Madre: ¿Hicimos algo especial con todos los otros niños.
Niño: ¿Qué?
Madre: Había mucha gente en la playa, y todo el mundo estaba haciendo algo en la arena.
Niño: ¿Qué hicimos?
Madre: ¿No te acuerdas lo que hicimos en la arena? Estábamos buscando algo.
Niño: Umm, no sé.
Madre: Fuimos a cavar en la arena.
Niño: Umm, y ahí fue cuando se rompió la pala amarilla.
Madre: Bien, se me había olvidado eso. Si, la pala amarilla se quebró, y ¿qué pasó?
Niño: Um, tuvimos que, umm, que cavar con el otro lado de la pala amarilla.
Madre: Claro. Usamos la pala rota, ¿no es así?
Niño: Si.

Por el contrario, los padres que se explayan menos hacen menos preguntas y preguntas más redundantes, básicamente repitiendo las mismas preguntas sin agregar nueva información.

Los padres que se explayan menos le dan poca ayuda al niño y la conversación se percibe más como una prueba de conocimientos específicos en vez de un esfuerzo de obtener reminiscencias. El siguiente ejemplo ilustra este tipo de conversación:

Madre: ¿Te acuerdas de los fuegos artificiales?
Niño: Si.
Madre: ¿Qué me puedes contar sobre ellos?
Niño: Um, hicieron luces y después se cayeron. Había uno azul.
Madre: Mmmm.
Niño: ¿Y cómo terminaron?
Madre: No sé. Dime tu.
Niño: No sé.
Madre: Oh.
Niño: ¿Te acuerdas?
Madre: Si, me acuerdo de los fuegos artificiales.

Esta diferencia en estilo narrativo es importante. Fivush y sus colegas descubrieron que el estilo de reminiscencias de los niños frecuentemente copia el estilo de los padres. Los padres que dan más detalles y que incluyen más evaluaciones de un evento tienen hijos que hacen lo mismo. Como resultado, los hijos de padres que se explayan más generalmente pueden recordar y contar sus experiencias de una manera más organizada y detallada.

Además, se descubrió que esta habilidad de contar minuciosas narraciones está relacionada a la capacidad de leer y escribir en la escuela. La practica que tuvieron en casa seguramente les da las bases en habilidades del lenguaje y vocabulario. El estilo narrativo familiar también fue relacionado a su desarrollo social y emocional. Las familias que hacen reminiscencias más completas también demostraron relaciones emocionales más seguras entre padre e hijos. Para estas familias, las narraciones minuciosas no solo pueden crear una fuerte identidad familiar sino que también situaciones divertidas en que las personas departen con ganas entre si.

## Diferencias de Género

Fivush también descubrió algunas interesantes diferencias de género en el estilo narrativo. Las madres tienden a explayarse más y también hablan más sobre las emociones que los padres. Además, ambos padres hablan más sobre el pasado con sus hijas que sus hijos. Ellos también hablan de una manera más explayada con las hijas, obteniendo mas colaboraciones sobre recuerdos de las niñas y les daban más retroalimentación.

Los padres también son diferentes en el tipo de información que discuten con sus hijas en comparación con los hijos; hablan más sobre las personas y las relaciones con sus hijas que con sus hijos. Finalmente, las madres y padres incluyen más información emocional, especialmente la tristeza cuando están conversando con una hija.

Estas diferencias en estilo de ser padres parecen influenciar la comprensión de los niños de las narraciones. La niñas aparentemente aprenden que las emociones son una parte importante de las narraciones y al final de los años preescolares ellas hablarán más sobre las emociones cuando rememoran eventos del pasados que los hombres.

El hallazgo más sobresaliente es que las diferencias de género pueden verse desde la temprana edad de 3 años. A esa edad, las niñas dan testimonios más largos y ricos de sus experiencias pasadas y hablan más sobre las personas y relaciones que los varones.

"Las diferencias son algo sorprendentes para mi", dice Fivush. "Siguen las líneas de los estereotipos de género pero fue interesante verlas tan claramente en estas historias familiares".

Mientras que muchas familias luchan por mantener sus ajetreadas agendas es importante reconocer el valor de sencillamente conversar entre si. Las reminiscencias familiares tienes efectos importantes no solo en el desarrollo cognitivo de nuestros niños, sino que también en su desarrollo social y en el sentido de su lugar en el mundo. Nuestros niños aprenden muchas cosas a través del ejemplo. Prestan atención a lo que hacen sus padres y la manera en que lo hacen. Entregarle a sus hijos buenos ejemplos a seguir les dará una base de la cual pueden aprender y crecer.

*Rachel Robertson, B.S. es escritora independiente que reside en Atlanta, Georgia que ha trabajado en investigación sicológica por 15 años. Recientemente asistió en un proyecto de narrativa familiar dirigido por el Dr., Fivush.*

## Cual es tu Estilo Narrativo

¿Qué tipo de reminiscencias haces con tu niño? ¿Adornas la conversación con detalles? ¿Felicitas y alientas la participación de tu hijo en la reminiscencias? ¿Le entregas a tu niño una evaluación de los eventos? ¿Usas nueva información en tus preguntas para suscitar los recuerdos de tus hijos? Si es así, seguramente estás participando en un estilo narrativo más explayado con tus hijos.

¿O hablas muy poco sobre el pasado? Cuando haces reminiscencias con tu hijo, ¿usas muy pocos detalles? ¿Le repites la misma pregunta a tu hijo hasta que recibes la respuesta que estás buscando? Estas son las características de un estilo menos explayado.

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# The Use and Misuse of Rewards

## *Motivating Your Child*

Information on raising children is more available today than at any other time in modern history. Anywhere you go, from supermarkets to bookstores to the internet, there are a multitude of articles, books, manuals, magazines, audio tapes, and DVDs all telling you what to do and what not to do, often times with contradictory information. And if that wasn't enough, just about everyone has an opinion on raising children. When it comes to parenting, everyone is an expert. So it's no wonder that there is often confusing and contradictory advice on the proper use of rewards as part of the overall plan in raising healthy, caring and cooperative children.

To begin to make some sense of all this "help," let's discuss the functional purpose of Rewards as a parenting strategy, and how the proper use of rewards plays an important role in establishing and maintaining family discipline.

**The Purpose of Rewards**

The philosophy behind the use of rewards is based on an old axiom: The behaviors that you pay attention to are the behaviors that are likely to reappear. In other words, Rewards are a form of recognition that let children know that parents are pleased with their behavior. Rewards are also necessary in helping children learn right from wrong. If parents only paid attention to the bad or wrong things children did in order to get parents attention, children would never learn to behave appropriately.

Some parents mistakenly believe that children "should just know what to do," as if they are born with some kind of built-in device that makes them know how to behave. Other parents think that by rewarding children for doing the right things their children will get "spoiled and conceited" and walk around with feelings of arrogance. These beliefs, and others, prevent parents from incorporating one of the most powerful strategies into their parenting practice. Think of Rewards as the miracle of parenting: with the proper amount your children will have a strong self-worth and positive view of themselves and others.

To understand the proper use of Rewards, let's examine their use in creating Family Discipline.

**The "If-Then" Philosophy of Discipline**

Consequences are the logical or natural result of an action. Consequences are based on the "If-Then" theory of behavior: If I do something, then

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something is going to happen. Consequences can be either pleasant or unpleasant.

Rewards are *pleasant* consequences that happen when children behave appropriately. Punishments are *unpleasant* consequences that happen when children choose to behave inappropriately. The word "choose" is emphasized here because much of the behavior of young children is exploratory. Parents need to be careful to make sure children aren't being punished for simply being curious. Many fascinated youngsters have dropped food onto the floor, dug up potted plants, and unwound toilet paper as part of a "scientific inquiry."

**Techniques for Rewarding Desirable Behaviors**

Rewards are a very powerful means of helping children learn to behave appropriately. Children will do more for a reward then they will avoid doing out of fear of punishment. Rewards also help children develop a positive sense of self-worth that further encourage them to make good choices.

Two of the most effective rewards in helping children learn appropriate behavior are praise and nurturing touch.

**Praise**

Praise is the single most powerful reward a parent can offer their children.

There are two types of praise: Praise for Doing and Praise for Being. Praise for Doing sends a clear message that the parent is very pleased with the *behavior* of their children. Praise for doing only focuses on the behavior of the children, not on the children themselves.

Some examples of Praise for Doing are:

"Bobby, what a great job you did taking care of your sister. Thanks a lot for your help."

"Jessica, thanks so much for your help in carrying up the groceries."

In both instances the parent focused on the *behavior* of the child, and made no reference to how much they love them or what terrific kids they are. The focus was simply *behavior*.

There is also a time to focus on your love for your children. This is called Praise for Being. Praise for Being only focuses on the *children*, not on their behavior. Some examples include:

"Darcy, you are the most wonderful child a parent could ever want as a daughter. I just wanted you to know how proud I am to be your Mom."

"Marcos, I love you just the way you are. I'm a proud parent of a terrific son."

In these examples, the focus was on the *children* and not on their behavior. Praise for Being is called unconditional praise because it places no conditions on the child to receive a parents love.

Here are some suggestions for using Praise for Being:

At sleep time, use Praise for Being while you are massaging your child. Feeling the nurturing touch and hearing statements of unconditional love is a beautiful way for your child to go to sleep.

A hug at night with a Praise for Being statement should be established as a night time routine in every family.

Write Praise for Being messages on napkins or a little piece of note paper and include them in children's lunch bags.

If the Praise for Being statements are sincere, children will know, that even when they mess up, they are still loved.

**Misuse of Praise**

Oddly enough, praise can be misused. The misuse of praise combines both Praise for Doing and Praise for Being creating a "conditional" type of praise. Conditional means a child has to do something in order to "earn" Praise for Being.

Some examples include:

"Adam, You did a great job cooperating. Dad really loves you."

" Carson, if you don't do as you are told, Mommy is not going to love you anymore."

"Look at this room! No daughter of mine lives in a room this messy. Until you clean your room young lady, I will have nothing to do with you!"

**Conditional Praise**

When a parents' love is conditional on a child's behavior, you can imagine the resentment that will build up in the child in a very short period of time. Many parents mistakenly use this form of Praise because they are repeating a pattern that they experienced as children. Other parents purposefully use Conditional Praise to

instill a sense of fear in the child by threatening to take their love away.

Conditional Praise just confuses children and results in an angry and anxious attachment to the parent. It erodes the quality of the relationship creating oppositional behavior, power struggles and an distrusting, distant relationship.

**Nurturing Touch**

Touch is a basic need all people, young and old, have in common.

Touch not only stimulates the physical growth of newborns, it is critical in the development of healthy social and emotional growth throughout life.

Parents can use touch as a way to continue to strengthen the bond with their children. Nurturing touch like daily massages to your children, hugs, kisses, back rubs and holding children in your arms is a wonderful way to send Praise for Being and Praise for Doing statements. Used in combination, Praise and Touch are the most powerful ways to recognize children.

**Misuse of Touch**

Harsh, unwanted, inappropriate, or hurting forms of touch are clearly a misuse. The handshake we got from Uncle Stanley that melded all five fingers into one giant digit; the hug we got from Aunt Martha that momentarily stopped our breathing and we didn't want in the first place but got anyway; and the slap or spank we got from Mom or Dad for misbehaving are just some of the countless examples of the misuse of touch children receive every day.

The misuse of touch results in a tactile defensiveness that inhibit children and adults alike from touching one another and enjoying being touched in appropriate, nurturing ways. All of us are robbed of the joys and security of a warm embrace because we feel it might result in a bad experience. Touch should only be used to strengthen a relationship, never to destroy one.

There is no such thing as recognizing too much good in children as long as the positive recognition is sincere and not manipulative. Remember the rule: The behaviors you pay attention to are the behaviors that are likely to reappear. Rewards are the most effective way to achieve this goal.

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***Stephen J. Bavolek, Ph.D., is principal author of the family-based Nurturing Parenting Programs used internationally to help families build their Nurturing Parenting Skills. He has won numerous national and international awards, appeared on television and radio talk shows, and is President of Family Development Resources. He lives with his wife, Juliana and three children in Asheville, North Carolina.***

***Juliana Dellinger-Bavolek, M. S. E., is a trainer with the International Association of Infant Massage. Her expertise is in the field of early education of children with special needs, and in promoting infant-parent attachment. She is co-author of the Nurturing Program for Parents and the Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers.***


# Objects, Gifts and Money

Some parents like to reward their older children with objects and gifts such as toys or CDs or DVDs as a positive consequence for appropriate behavior. Some parents may give children money as a reward. In moderation, there is nothing terrible about giving your child a gift, or having him earn money to buy a CD.

Earning money for doing chores is a nice way to teach children ages 10 and older about money management. It's the basic principle behind salary increases and bonuses. The message is: Your performance is appreciated.

But using this technique with preschoolers is often inappropriate. They don't really understand the connection and can feel confused and even punished when they don't hold up their end of the bargain and don't get the reward.

Even with older children this technique is often misused. When the great percentage of rewards children receive are "things" children learn that behaving leads to the acquisition of material goods. They don't learn to behave because it is right or appropriate to do so. There is a good chance that this situation will result in a never-ending need to acquire more and more things. "What am I going to get if I behave" will be the question continually raised by the materially driven child.

If the reward amounts to a bribe, that is "Mommy will buy you an ice cream cone if you behave," the lesson you are teaching is that cooperation is something that needs to be purchased. It is clearly the wrong message to send to children.

*Stephen J. Bavolek, PhD*
*Juliana Dellinger-Bavolek, MSE.*

# Dear Reader...

Raising good, responsible, caring children is the most challenging task facing parents. So, we were delighted when Stephen Bavolek, Ph.D. and Juliana Dellinger-Bavolek MSE agreed to write another article for us on this topic. This feature is on the use and misuse of rewards. It's not the 'give a child a candy bar for behaving' school. These are the universal and fundamental rewards of genuine praise and love.

Anytime is a good time to take pictures of our children. Professional photographers Rick Staudt and Lisa Jane have kindly allowed us to share their experience and photographic know-how. You'll be reaching for your camera when you've finished reading this article.

A few months ago we said "*good-bye*" to Sandy Allen who had been writing our Preschooler in the Kitchen column. Today, we're delighted to welcome Alice Brown who will be sharing her recipes and experiences.

We hope you enjoyed your summer. We're happy to see you back!

Heidi Schwartzberg

# *We Want to Hear from You*

*Children, Their Diet, and Preschooler in the Kitchen*

We recently received a letter from a reader concerned that our recipes for cheese rolls and ham logs would contribute to children's cholesterol, obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

So, we consulted the American Dietetic Association for their guidance on foods and diet for young children.

Here's what their spokesperson, Jackie Berning, PhD, RD told us:

It is extremely important for families of preschoolers to realize that "all foods fit into" a preschoooers' diet but some of them should be consumed in moderation and not eaten everyday or at every meal.

Preschool children should be exposed to a variety of foods because the more they are exposed to different foods, the more likely they are to grow up eating a variety of foods. What foods should you expose them to? There are 40 nutrients that are required by preschoolers however, not one food can provide all forty nutrients. Therefore variety and moderation rule in a preschoolers diet.

No food is taboo, but a parent must take responsibility and make sure that their preschoolers are getting the nutrients they need to grow.

It is irresponsible to give your preschooler ice cream and soda pop everyday. However, you can teach your preschooler when it is appropriate to eat these types of foods and show them where they fit in their diet. Ice cream can be an excellent source of calcium for a toddler and soda pop can provide calories for that busy age, but a steady diet of soda pop and ice cream will not allow the child to grow and be healthy.

Research has shown that children below the age of two should not be on a low fat diet. The brain and nerve endings continue to grow and develop up until 2 years of age and that requires both fat and cholesterol. Restricting fat at this age may impair the body's ability to do its job. On the other hand, a 3 year old who slept through his lunch could very well use some ham and cheese as a good source of protein and an excellent source of calcium as a snack. The nutrients in those two foods will help him grow and satisfy his hunger since he slept through his meal.

As a registered dietitian and mother of two sons who made it through the toddler stage, I found that restricting foods and not allowing them to eat foods because they provided no nutrients or were high in fat, only made them want it more.

Yes, we as a nation are overweight and obese and our children are headed down that same path, however, parents can help by showing children when it is appropriate to eat certain high fat, high calorie foods as opposed to never allowing them to eat them at all. Show me a child whose parents never let him eat french fries or burgers or ham rolls and I will show you a young adult who eats them all the time because he was never taught how those foods fit in a healthy diet.

***Jackie Berning, PhD, RD, Spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association and mother of two sons now 16 and 11 who are healthy eaters and maintain activity through sports.***

## Stuttering Booklet... 🕮 *The Child Who Stutters at School: Notes to the teacher*

Available in English and Spanish from the Stuttering Foundation this free brochure helps teachers by addressing both the teasing and the stuttering. It provides guidance on how to deal with reading aloud, calling on the child and other classroom issues.

Jane Fraser, president of the Stuttering Foundation, notes that parents of children who stutter often give a copy of the booklet to their child's teacher.

• *The brochure, as well as more information on stuttering, can be obtained from the Stuttering Foundation, 3100 Walnut Grove Road, Suite 603, Memphis, TN 38111. You can call toll free at 800 992-9392, or visit their websites:* **www.stutteringhelp.org,** *and* **www.tartamudez.org.**

# Preschooler in the Kitchen

## It's Tomato Time!

Farm stands are ablaze with bushel baskets of shiny red tomatoes of every size, and city markets are over-flowing with tomato varieties ranging from huge ponderosa to pear and cherry tomatoes. For some of us, they are warm-from-the-sun, just-picked from the garden delights. Or perhaps you will find a paper bag on your doorstep – overflow from a neighbor's well-tended tomato patch. However you come by this treasure, September is the time when young children can learn what a real tomato tastes like.

Some may need to overcome an aversion to the pale, gassed-to-pink slices they are accustomed to finding on a Big Mac. You can introduce kids to the fact that tomatoes are actually fruits, and just as sweet, when eaten very, very fresh.

Here are some simple steps to encourage your child to become more aware of tomatoes as a particular and very delicious food.

Start by buying an array of appealing, one-bite mini-tomatoes such as grape, currant, cherry or yellow pear varieties. Put them out at all times of the day in pretty, small bowls or baskets. There are valuable lessons to be learned through handling the fruit, washing it and arranging it. Tomatoes do not like to sit in the refrigerator, so keeping them at room temperature enhances flavor. Since young children learn best by example, make sure your child catches you eating them.

In my family, those of us who lived in New York used to argue with our New England relatives – we always put salt and pepper on our sliced tomatoes, while our New Hampshire cousins put sugar on theirs. I've learned to like both ways.

Tomatoes are a popular ingredient in the cooking of many cultures. They offer an opportunity to introduce your child to the idea of national dishes; that spaghetti sauce comes from Italy and tacos originated in Mexico.

## In the Kitchen

It is important to think of the time that you spend with your child in the kitchen as an opportunity to be together and to teach. Children are keen observers, and they are sensitive to mood. They know when you are relaxed or hurried. They are affected by whether you are goal-oriented or process-oriented, and by your enjoyment of the task. From washing hands to setting the table, children can acquire valuable skills and become competent, participating family members through cooking experiences.

### *Tacos*

Tacos have child-appeal because they are crunchy and hand-held. They are also great for involving children in an orderly, sequential process. Although you will need to wield the sharp knife to shred the lettuce, children can chop tomatoes in one of those enclosed glass choppers; they can grate the cheese on a square grater that sits firmly on the table; and best of all, they can assemble the tacos from ingredients in bowls that are lined up in order. Find a dish that will hold a fair number of taco shells in an upright position (I sometimes use bread pans). Then let your child fill the shells with sauteed ground beef, tomatoes, shaved lettuce, and grated cheese, in that order. Serve a hot or mild taco sauce or salsa on the side for grown-up tastes. A festive table with straw mats or gay cotton scarves would carry out the Mexican theme and give a simple meal a party-like atmosphere.

### *Spaghetti Sauce*

Most children love spaghetti, although they can be somewhat eclectic in how they like it topped. Some like just butter or oil, some like their sauce on the side, others like their pasta swimming in sauce. Children's choices should be honored; this is the way they develop autonomy. Help them to voice these preferences and serve themselves with the items that please them. But remember, when they are involved in the preparation of the meal they are more likely to be interested in trying different foods and making new choices. So, get out the enclosed glass chopper and freshen up the spaghetti sauce by adding plenty of fresh, chopped garden tomatoes to the usual store-bought variety or a portion of homemade cooked sauce. The result will be lighter and less spicy and may have more child appeal.

### *Pizza*

While you're invigorating the tomato sauce, set some aside for easy pizza-making. English muffins make just the right size base for small appetites. Children love to grate the mozzarella and help on the assembly line – a spoonful of sauce, a small fistful of cheese, a shake of good olive oil and then the add-ons (sliced meatballs, shredded basil leaves, fresh oregano – whatever your child desires). A few moments in the toaster oven and lunch will be ready.

Before we leave the land of red and plenty, remember to have fun in the kitchen. Open-face sandwiches of tuna or cheese can be decorated with tomato eyes and celery lips. Tiny tomatoes can top devilled eggs. A celery boat filled with cream cheese or peanut butter can be dotted with currant tomatoes. Have a contest popping mini-tomatoes in your mouth. Sometimes playing with food makes healthy good sense!

Buon appetito!

*Alice Brown*

# *In the Picture:* Composing Memorable Photos

We all love photos. There is something wonderful about capturing a special moment on film. Professional photographers Lisa Jane and Rick Staudt offer some tips that will inspire budding photographers!

**▪ Composition**

Key to any successful work of art is composition. Every time we point our camera at a subject and take a picture, we make several decisions. We have to decide what part of the scene in front of us should be included and what should be left out. Should we zoom in close or capture the whole scene? Will the picture work better taken as a vertical or a horizontal?

Over the centuries, masters of art have identified certain principles of design and composition that are still taught to artists and graphic designers today.

**▪ Portrait Studies vs. the Environmental Approach**

It's possible to divide pictures of children into two broad categories: portrait and environmentals.

A portrait is a picture taken close up that primarily features the child or children, with the setting and background only secondary in importance.

Environmentals are pictures in which the child is placed into a setting that becomes a dominant element in the photograph.

Both types are wonderful expressions of childhood, and it's worth deciding which approach you want to take before you click the shutter.

**▪ Portraits**

Portraits, or close-ups, are what most of us are used to taking. Parents, in particular, tend to ask their children to look up at the camera and smile, thinking they are taking a portrait. If you remember nothing else from this book, just remember this: Move in closer!

Most children's portraits are taken from much too far away. By coming in closer you can capture nuances of expression while at the same time eliminate meaningless distractions. You can come in closer either by using your zoom lens or by being a "human zoom" and just walking up.

Close-up portraits are probably the hardest pictures to do really well because when you move in close, the child almost inevitably becomes aware of the camera, making it more difficult to capture a truly candid moment.

When taking a portrait of a child or group of children, you probably want to focus on the faces while playing down other elements. How do you do that?

First of all, you can select a background that doesn't have any bright, contrast elements fighting for our attention.

You can dress children in simple, timeless clothes that are not too busy or trendy and that won't look dated in a few years.

It's also advantageous to have a zoom lens that extends out to the 80 mm-105 mm focal-length range or longer. Coming in close with a short telephoto lens like this automatically blurs the background out of focus.

**▪ Environmentals**

An environmental, as opposed to a portrait, gives almost as much importance to the setting as to the child. It is a wonderful way to tell a story in pictures. Look at almost any Norman Rockwell painting, for instance. Surrounding the young girl and her kitten or the Boy Scout with his little brother will be several elements that tell you so much about the children that you instantly feel as though you know them.

**▪ Horizontal vs. Vertical Compositions**

Take a good long look at your camera. Does it say "hold horizontally?" We see so many pictures of a standing child taken horizontally with all sorts of distracting clutter on either side, when a tighter vertical composition would have filled the frame with a much cleaner and more interesting image.

Portraits of individual children, seated or standing, are often best taken vertically. This is usually the most effective format for coming in close enough to position the children prominently while eliminating distractions. Usually, the closer you come in, the better – assuming you are not trying to capture some interesting element in the background.

Conversely, a child lying on her side is often best photographed horizontally, as are most groups of children. These are only general rules, and you have our full permission to go out there and break them. Just be sure you know why you are doing it.

**▪ A Single Center of Interest**

Most great images lead the viewer to a single point of primary interest. Assuming you are photographing one child, try to center everything in the picture on that child. If you notice any clutter in the frame that will distract attention from the child, take the time to remove it. Such simple attention to detail is often what distinguishes a terrific picture from a mediocre one.

So, you're making a picture of a group of children and you're worrying to yourself, "Hmm, there's more than one center of attention here." Easy – just pose them so close together that everyone's touching. Alternatively, give them a fun activity to do together, and suddenly you'll have condensed a random bunch of children

» » *Continued from Page 6.*
into one center of interest...a group.

**▪ Placing the Child in the Picture**

One way to make your subject really stand out is by knowing where to place the child in the frame. You could reason that placing a child smack in the center of the picture would focus all the attention on him, and that might be so. The problem is that the child can look sort of trapped, with nowhere to move, resulting in a picture that seems boring and stagnant.

An effective rule of thumb is to place the child a little bit off center, about a third of the way in from the top or bottom and from the left or right edge. This is called the rule of thirds, and it is one of the most powerful and most pervasive rule of art composition ever devised.

Off-center placement of children tends to result in a more exciting composition, implying action and giving the subject a place to be and a direction to go.

Often a frame within a frame can be found or created in a setting, and that makes a very effective device for focusing interest on a child. A good example might be photographing a child through an open window or door frame. Your eyes naturally move through the frame and onto the child. Spend some time with your child looking for frames, natural and man-made, to use in composing some great pictures. Frames can be made of hats, scarves, tree limbs, your limbs, or any number of things.

**▪ Pick Your Best Angle**

Some photographers develop the lazy habit of taking every picture from a standing position. What happens when this person is taking pictures of children? The children are forced to look up at the camera, which focuses the viewer of the picture to a look down on them. It can be a fun angle if you want to catch a picture of, say, a child covered in chocolate with her hands in the cookie jar, but normally it is not the most flattering or interesting position from which to shoot.

Drop right down to your knees, or even lie down if necessary, and photograph children eye to eye. It's more fun for everybody involved, and you get the opportunity to reveal the world from a child's perspective.

It also makes good sense to walk a complete circle around the child, looking for the best point-of-view. That might come in the form of prettier lighting on the child's face or fewer distractions in the background. In any case, it is often worth the effort, if the situation allows you to take the extra time.

Take a new look at the world around you and think about the simple compositional rules we have been talking about. Look at the images you see in magazines, movies, and on TV. Think about the spacing and cropping around the subjects. Think about the camera angles and compositional elements. One of the most valuable educational exercises is just to look at professional photographs that companies have paid piles of money for and think about why the photographer composed and photographed the image the way he did. Sooner or later, you will turn into your own art critic, and your own pictures will benefit from the experience.

**▪ Working with Children**

Here is an exercise in frustration. Take a normal, energetic, curious two-year-old boy. Dress him up in an uncomfortable suit with a tight bow tie and make him sit in a stiff, uncomfortable chair. Wait till just before nap time.

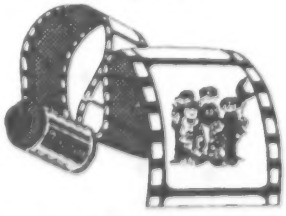
Instead of teaching your child how unpleasant it is to have his picture taken, make photography a fun and comfortable experience. Why not just let him be a two-year-old? You already know what makes him happy, and at what time of day he is usually active and energetic. Take advantage of that knowledge and let it work in your favor.

Putting a child into a fun situation does not mean that you should abdicate control of the photo session. You can still determine what the child is wearing, eliminate distractions in the background, and place him in an appropriate setting. But once all of the artistic and compositional pieces are in place, just sit down and have some fun, taking pictures all the while. You'll be more successful, and your child will also learn that being photographed can be fun.

The child does not have to be looking into the camera the whole time you are having fun together. How can he have any fun doing that? But after you have a few great pictures of the child playing, reading, petting the puppy, or whatever, and just as he is smiling happily, you can ask him to look up (or better, just make a funny noise to regain his attention), and then catch that lovable little face!

Let the children become participants in the photographic process. When they are old enough, sit down together over a root beer and talk about what they think would make a neat picture. Talk about their pets and activities, their favorite clothes and other things they like. You can use their silliest ideas to photograph them, and then learn together what works and what does not. You might even let them photograph you for a change. What a great way of getting closer to your children, invest time in them and creating lasting memories together!

***Adapted with permission from "How to Photograph Children: Secrets for capturing childhood's magic moments" by Lisa Jane and Rick Staudt; Abbeville Press Publishers, New York, 2000.***





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# Library Resources

## Something Special

📖 ***Family Matters: Parenting tips from the business world*** by Roni Jay; Parenting Press, Inc.; Seattle, WA; 2002; Paperback $13.95. Do you treat your family the way you'd treat a customer, or expect to be treated as a customer? Probably not. Family is different. But suppose you used some of those principles in family life. Roni Jay has taken business wisdom and adapted it to children.

Each section starts with a business tip and then shows how you might use it with your children. It's not specifically designed for preschoolers so much of the information is more appropriate for older children, clear into teenage years. But, that's where our kids will end up eventually anyway. And this book will be useful for the journey. It's thought-provoking, practical, and down-to-earth.

## School Books

📖 ***Corduroy Goes to School*** based on the character created by Don Freeman; pictures by Lisa McCue; Penguin Putnam (Viking); New York; 2002; Hard cover $11.99. Everyone will want to go to school after reading this lift-the-flap book. Irrepressible Corduroy is back at school. He's playing with his friends, taking care of the class pets, bringing buttons for show-and-tell, having a special snack and drawing a picture about his favorite part of the day.

📖 ***Countdown to Kindergarten*** by Alison McGhee; pictures by Harry Bliss; Harcourt, Inc. (Silent Whistle); San Diego; 2002; Hardcover, $16.00. For kids who fear that kindergarten won't be a welcoming place, this is the story of a little girl who can't tie her shoes. She's positive that she'll be the only one struggling to tie those laces, and that she's not ever allowed to ask for help. Surprise! When she goes to school she discovers that she was wrong. And school isn't that scary, and she's going to do fine.

## Warm Family Books

📖 ***Baby Loves*** by Michael Lawrence; illustrated by Adrian Reynolds; DK Publishing, Inc.; New York; 1999; Hardcover $9.95. Baby loves Mommy and Daddy more than anything in the world. Except... Go through this baby's happy day, loving everything until bedtime when he loves Mommy and Daddy more than anything in the world. Period.

📖 ***Everywhere Babies*** by Susan Meyers; illustrated by Marla Frazee; Harcourt, Inc.; San Diego; 2001; Hardcover $16.00. These babies and their parents are everywhere. They're being kissed, rocked, dressed and more by their loving families. Frazee's charming, sensitive illustrations add to the warmth and love. And "Every day, everywhere, babies are loved: for trying so hard, for traveling so far, for being so wonderful...just as they are!"

📖 ***Panda Big and Panda Small***; Jane Cabrera; DK Publishing, Inc.; New York; 1999; Hardcover $9.95. Panda Big and Panda Small don't like the same things at all. But they do know that the one thing that makes them both feel glad is being together.

📖 ***Show Me!*** by Tom Tracy; pictures by Darcia Labrosse; HarperFestival (HarperCollins Publishers); New York; 1999; Boardbook $5.95. Mother and Baby play at the games of infancy. She nuzzles baby's nose, wiggles his chin, tickles the tummy and finally snuggles and hugs.

📖 ***Spot Bakes a Cake*** by Eric Hill; Puffin Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 1997; Softcover lift-the-flap, $5.99. Spot is baking a cake for his father's birthday with his mother. He's certainly enthusiastic, although certainly not neat. At the end he presents the cake to dad who judges the cake to be delicious.

### Phthalate Update...

**The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges further study to determine safe amounts of phthalates for children.**

*Parent & preschooler Newsletter* recently ran an article (April, 2003) that discussed phthalates and the concerns being raised, particularly with their use in toys for children. In a new report, the AAP urges further research into the way "children are exposed to phthalates, and the effects of these compounds on pregnant and lactating women, premature and full-term infants, and young children; to better determine safe levels of exposure."

Noting that "everyone is exposed to phthalates on a daily basis" their concern is that two phthalates compounds are found in toys and in medical devices. Young children mouth many objects, including but not limited to toys. This level of exposure is even higher for needing medical care.

"Diethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP) is most commonly found in those medical devices including blood bags and intravenous fluid bags, as well as in toys. Diisononyl phthalate (DINP) is used in making toys."

Although parents need to be cautious, "manufacturers in the US and Canada have removed these compounds from infant bottle nipples, teethers, and toys intended for mouthing."


CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
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NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

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# El Uso y Mal Uso de las Recompensas

## *Motivando a su Niño*

La información sobre criar niños está mas disponible hoy que en cualquier otro momento de la historia moderna. En cualquier parte, desde supermercados a librerías y en el Internet, existen una multiplicidad de artículos, libros, manuales, revistas, casetes, y DVDs manifestando que tienes que hacer y no hacer, frecuentemente con información contradictoria. Y como si eso fuese poco, casi todo el mundo tiene una opinión sobre como criar niños. En el caso de ser padres, todos son expertos. Así que no es sorpresa que frecuentemente hay consejos equívocos y contradictorios sobre el uso apropiado de las recompensas como una parte del plan general de criar niños saludables, cariñosos y cooperativos.

Para poder descifrar toda esta "ayuda", discutamos el objetivo funcional de las recompensas como una estrategia de ser padres, y como el uso adecuado de recompensas tiene un papel importante en establecer y mantener la disciplina familiar.

### El Objetivo de las Recompensas

La filosofía subyacente en el uso de las recompensas está basada en un viejo axioma: las conductas a las cuales uno le presta atención son las conductas que posiblemente pueden repetirse. En otras palabras, las recompensas son una forma de reconocimiento que le comunica a los niños que los padres están complacidos con su conducta. Las recompensas también son necesarias para ayudar a los niños a reconocer lo que está bien y lo que está mal. Si los padres solo le prestaran atención solo a las cosas malas o inapropiadas que hicieron los niños para obtener la atención de los padres, los niños tendrían que comportarse inadecuadamente.

Algunos padres erróneamente creen que los niños "debieran saber exactamente que hacer", como si nacieran con algún tipo de dispositivo que los hace saber como comportarse. Otros padres creen que al recompensar a los niños por hacer lo correcto los creará en "consentidos y presumidos" y los hará comportase con sentimientos de arrogancia. Estas ideas, y otras, niegan la posibilidad de incorporar una de las estrategias más poderosas en su práctica como padres. Considere a las recompensas como el fertilizante de ser padres: con la cantidad adecuada sus niños tendrán una fuerte autoestima y una visión positiva de si mismos y de otros.

Para entender el uso apropiado de las recompensas, examinemos su uso en la creación de la disciplina familiar.

### La Filosofía de Disciplina "Si Entonces"

Las consecuencias son el resultado lógico y natural de una acción. Las consecuencias están basadas en la teoría conductual de "si entonces": Si hago algo, entonces algo pasará.

### Las consecuencias pueden ser buenas o malas.

Las recompensas son consecuencias BUENAS que le suceden a los niños cuando se portan apropiadamente. Los castigos son consecuencias MALAS que le pasan a los niños cuando optan por portarse impropiamente. Se recalca la palabra "optan" porque mucha de la conducta de los niños pequeños es exploratoria. Los padres tienen que tener cuidado y asegurarse que los niños no sean castigados por ser simplemente curiosos. Muchos niños fascinados han botado comida al piso, han desenterrado plantas, o desenrollado el papel higiénico como parte de sus investigaciones científicas.

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## Técnicas Para Recompensar Conductas Deseables

Las recompensas son una manera muy poderosa para ayudar a los niños a portarse apropiadamente. Los niños harán más por una recompensa que evitar hacer algo por temor al castigo. Las recompensas también ayudan a los niños a desarrollar un sentimiento positivo de autoestima que los alienta más a tomar decisiones correctas.

Dos de las recompensas mas eficaces para ayudar a los niños a aprender conductas apropiadas son elogios y contacto físico reconfortante.

## Elogios

Los elogios son la recompensa más poderosa que los padres pueden ofrecerles a sus hijos.

Hay dos tipos de elogios: los elogios por hacer y los elogios por ser. Los elogios por hacer envían un mensaje claro que el padre está muy contento con la CONDUCTA de sus niños. Los elogios por hacer solo enfoca en la conducta de los niños, no en los niños en sí.

Algunos ejemplos de elogios por hacer son:
"Roberto, qué bien cuidaste a tu hermana. Gracias por tu ayuda".
"Jessica, millón de gracias por haberme ayudado a llevar los paquetes".
En ambos casos los padres enfocaron la CONDUCTA del niño, y no hicieron ninguna referencia a cuanto los quieren o a lo maravilloso que son. El enfoque estaba sencillamente en la CONDUCTA.

También hay un momento para focalizar su amor por sus niños. Esto se llama "elogio por ser". Elogio por ser solamente enfoca al niño, y no su conducta.

Algunos ejemplos incluyen:
"Daniela, tu eres la niña más maravillosa que un padre pudiese tener como hija. Solo quería decirte lo orgullosa que estoy de ser tu madre".
"Marcos, te quiero como eres. Soy el orgulloso padre de un hijo fantástico".

En estos ejemplos, el foco estaba en los niños y no en su conducta. Elogios por ser se llama Elogios Incondicionales porque no pone ninguna condición en el niño para que reciba el amor de sus padres.

He Aquí Algunas Sugerencias Para Usar Elogios Por Ser:
A la hora de dormir, use elogios por ser mientras le hace masajes a su niño. Sentir el contacto reconfortante y escuchar declaraciones de amor incondicional es una manera maravillosa para un niño quedarse dormido. Un abrazo en la noche con una declaración de elogios por ser debe convertirse en una rutina nocturna en todas las familias.

Escriba mensajes de elogios por ser en servilletas de papel o pequeños papelitos e inclúyalos en las bolsas de almuerzo de los niños.

Si los elogios por ser son sinceros, los niños sabrán que incluso cuando hagan errores, seguirán siendo amados.

## Mal Uso de los Elogios

Aunque parezca raro, los elogios pueden ser mal usados. El mal uso de los elogios combina los elogios por hacer y los elogios por ser creando así un tipo de elogio "condicional". Condicional quiere decir que un niño tiene que hacer algo para "ganarse" elogios por ser.

Algunos ejemplos incluyen:
"Juan, hiciste un gran trabajo ayudando. Tu papá realmente te quiere".
"Carlos, si no haces lo que te dicen, la mamá no te va a querer".
¡"Mira tu habitación! ¡Mi hija no puede vivir en una habitación tan desordenada. Hasta que no limpies tu cuarto, no tendré nada que ver contigo"!

## Elogios Condicionales

Wow! Cuando el amor de un padre está condicionado a la conducta de un niño, te puedes imaginar el resentimiento que se acumulará en el niño en un corto periodo de tiempo. Muchos padres usan erróneamente esta forma de elogio porque están repitiendo un patrón que experimentaron cuando eran niños. Otros padres usan los elogios condicionales deliberadamente para instaurar un sentimiento de miedo en el niño amenazando quitarles el amor.

Los elogios condicionales solo confunden a los niños y tiene como resultado en una afinidad angustiada y resentida con el padre. Erosiona la calidad de la relación creando una conducta opuesta, luchas por el poder y una relación de desconfianza y distante.

## Contacto Físico Reconfortante

El contacto físico es una necesidad básica de todas las personas, que los jóvenes y los ancianos tienen en común.

El contacto no solo estimula el crecimiento físico de los recién nacidos, sino también fundamental en el desarrollo del crecimiento social y emocional sano a través de la vida.

Los padres pueden usar el contacto físico como una manera para seguir fortaleciendo el vínculo con sus niños. Contacto físico reconfortante como los masajes diarios a los niños, caricias, besos, masajes a la espalda, y abrazarlos es una manera maravillosa de demostrar elogios por ser y elogios por hacer. Usados en combinación, elogios y contacto físico son la manera más fuerte de darle reconocimiento a los niños.

## El Mal Uso del Contacto Físico

Las formas de contacto fuerte, inapropiado, o dolorosa son claramente impropias. El apretón de manos del tío Juan que comprimió los cinco dedos en uno solo; el abrazo de la tía Marta que momentáneamente detuvo nuestra respiración y que, además, no queríamos pero igual lo recibimos; la palmada que recibimos de mamá y papá por habernos portado mal son algunos de

los múltiples ejemplos de contacto impropio que los niños reciben todos los días.

El contacto físico impropio tiene como resultado una actitud defensiva sensorial que inhibe a los niños y a los adultos a tocarse mutuamente y de gozar de acariciarse de maneras apropiadas y vivificantes. Todos somos robados de la felicidad y de la seguridad de un abrazo cariñoso porque pensamos que puede tener una mala experiencia como resultado. El contacto físico solo debe usarse para fortalecer una relación, nunca para destruirla.

No existe el reconocer demasiado a los niños con tal que el reconocimiento positivo sea sincero y no manipulador. Recuerde la regla: las conductas a las que uno le presta atención son las conductas que posiblemente reaparezcan. Las recompensas son la manera más eficaz de lograr esta meta.

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## Objetos, Regalos y Dinero

A algunos padres les gusta recompensar a sus niños mayores con objetos y regalos como juguetes. Cds o DVDs como una consecuencia positiva de buena conducta. Algunos padres le dan a los niños dinero como premio. Con moderación no tiene nada de malo darle a su niño un regalo, o hacerlo ganar dinero para que pueda comprar un disco. Ganar dinero por hacer labores domésticas es una buena manera de enseñarles a los niños de más de 10 años el manejo del dinero. Este es el principio básico de los aumentos de sueldo y de las bonificaciones. El mensaje es: se agradece tu desempeño.

Pero el uso de esta técnica con preescolares es generalmente inapropiada. Ellos realmente no comprenden la relación y pueden sentirse confundidos e incluso castigados cuando no cumplen con su parte del trato y no reciben recompensa.

Incluso con niños de más edad esta técnica es frecuentemente mal utilizada. Cuando las únicas recompensas que los niños reciben son "cosas", los niños aprenden que las buenas conductas tienen como resultado la adquisición de bienes materiales. No aprenden a portarse bien porque es lo correcto o lo apropiado. Existe una buena posibilidad que esta situación tenga como resultado una necesidad incesante de adquirir más y más cosas. ¿"Qué voy a recibir si me porto bien"? será la pregunta que será continuamente planteada por el niño impulsado por el materialismo.

Si la recompensa es realmente un soborno, es decir, "Mamá te comprará un helado si te portas bien", la lección que estás dando es que la cooperación es algo que tiene que ser comprada. Este es claramente el mensaje equivocado para los niños.

***Stephen J. Bavolek, Ph.D. y Juliana Delliger-Bavolek, MSE.***

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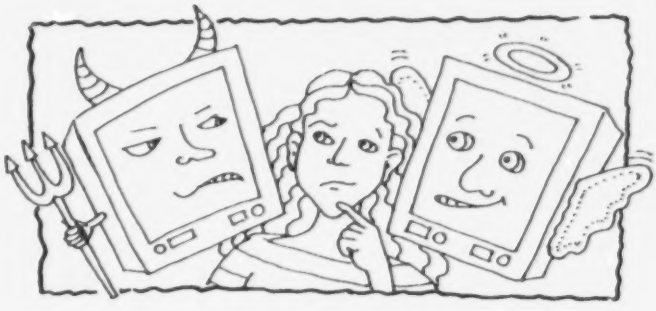
# Why Not Turn It Off?

## *Developing Healthy TV Habits*

When our child was born, we got rid of our TV," proudly announced a woman at a recent media literacy workshop, sure that her action provided evidence of her excellent parenting. I had mixed feelings about her comment. On the one hand, it is always nice to find a parent who is so concerned about her children. On the other hand, everything I know about television and child development indicates that she did her child a disservice.

The television is a piece of technology that, by itself, is neither good nor bad for children. Whether or not it becomes a problem, depends on how we use it. And while it is true that, many of us don't use it very well, it is also true that simply turning it off is an easy way out. Like most easy outs, it may seem beneficial in the short run, but it doesn't serve kids very well in the long run.

There are plenty of reasons to be mindful and even concerned about children and TV. When kids watch a lot – and in most studies, "a lot" means upwards of 30 hours of screen time a week – they are more prone to obesity and less likely to succeed in school. And if what they are watching contains a lot of violence, they are at increased risk for acting out aggressively or becoming desensitized to real-life violence.



On the other hand, there is no evidence anywhere that well-designed educational programming viewed in moderation does any harm at all. To the contrary, it can be beneficial. The trick is choosing the right programs and learning how to establish healthy family viewing routines.

### *Hints for Choosing Programs*

The easiest way to evaluate a program is to ask yourself one simple question: Is this program making my job as a parent harder or easier? The question isn't about whether or not to have the set on, nearly every parent uses television as a distraction technique at some point, but rather, paying attention to what youngsters are watching when they are in front of the TV.

If the program contradicts the values you are trying to instill, leaves kids feeling cranky, causes nightmares, or provides dangerous behaviors that preschoolers can copy, then the program is making your job as a parent harder. Parenting is hard enough. Make TV your ally by choosing programs that reinforce rather than undermine what you are trying to do.

Another way to test if a television program is appropriate for preschoolers is to watch with the sound off. Preschoolers don't have the language capabilities to follow normal dialogue (like the script of a soap opera or the innuendo of a sitcom), the life experience to understand parodies (like those in *Rugrats* or *Animaniacs*), or the abstract thinking capabilities needed to understand that relevant things happen off-screen (like *Funniest Home Videos'* decision to use only clips where no one actually gets hurt). So what very young children take away from the screen is based almost exclusively on what they *see*. You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might be surprised at some of the messages when you take away the context that words or experience provide.

### *Hints for Using Programs*

In nearly every workshop, someone asks, "How much TV time is okay?" There is no easy answer to that question because everyone uses the television differently. We do know that children need time for things like conversation, moving around, and free play (both alone and with others). Children who dance along with *Barney* or talk with friends and family about what they see may be getting some of what they need during media time. Other children may not. Every family needs to customize the integration of media time into a balanced daily routine.

But no matter what your family's particular needs, there are some things that nearly everyone can do to increase the likelihood that TV use in their home will be healthy, especially for preschoolers:

☞ Reserve use of the remote control for adults. Allowing young children to surf through channels guarantees that they will come across inappropriate material.

☞ Don't put a TV in your child's bedroom. You can't monitor what is on a set that you can't see. Just like you wouldn't allow a stranger to be alone in a room with your child, it is not a good idea to allow your child to be alone in a room with the TV.

☞ Turn off the TV during meal times. Eating in front of the TV interferes with an important opportunity for family conversation and contributes to the development of bad eating habits.

☞ Record programs and view from tape or digitally stored files. Having things on tape gives you total control of what children watch and it gives the added opportunity to view again, something preschoolers like to do.

☞ Watch programs, not television. Find programs you actually want to view and when the show is over, turn off the set. Don't let children develop the habit of sitting down and flipping channels until they find something they can stand to watch. Don't turn the set on just to fill time or provide background noise.

☞ Avoid commercial programming. The media can function as a kind of mirror, providing an image of how viewers are supposed to see themselves. Non-commercial, educational media approaches children as learners and valuable people. Commercial media approaches children as consumers. The more commercial media children watch, the more likely they are to define their value by what they own and to measure your love by what you buy for them.

☞ Provide alternative activities. Given the choice between watching TV and doing other entertaining activities, children will nearly always choose to do something else. And what is at the top of a preschooler's list of favored activities? Spending time with mom or dad.

### *Dealing with TV-Related Behavior*

Dad has just grabbed his four-year-old in time to prevent him from body slamming the cat and, after catching his breath, explains, "You can't do that. When real people do that, it hurts." The youngster nods in seeming understanding, but an hour later is karate kicking a playmate. In part, what's happening here is that dad has used a clear and concise explanation but until the ages of 6 or 7, children are not capable of distinguishing between real and pretend, at least not the way adults define it. So something more, in the way of explanation, is needed.

Obviously, we can't just let behavior go unchecked, especially if it is dangerous. So what do we do? We might start by choosing programs that don't model dangerous behavior, but if that is all you do and there are other reasons for your child's aggressive behavior, you can take away the TV but the behavior will continue. Besides, you can't always control what kids see, especially outside your home. So the best strategy is to set limits.

Children learn at very young ages that adults get to do things that they can't, like drive cars and cook on the stove. They also learn that there are things they can do at home that they aren't allowed to do at grandma's or outside or at daycare and vice versa.

So when you have a child imitating undesirable TV behavior, set limits by simply saying something along the lines of, "they do that on TV but we don't do that here." You can and should certainly explain why, but for young children, that explanation alone is not enough to change the behavior.

If the behavior is simply undesirable, but not dangerous, you might also try engaging in the fantasy. If a child who can speak in full sentences begins talking like Cookie Monster and saying "me want cookie", you might acknowledge that it is okay for a TV monster to talk that way but that we speak in full sentences at the dinner table. If that doesn't work, acknowledge that a child pretending to be like Cookie Monster must be playing and join in the game. When the child says, "me want cookie," hand them a pretend cookie. If they want the real thing, they'll quickly learn that they need to say, "May I have a cookie, please."

It can be a mistake to stop the child from viewing a program if the behavior you are seeing is regressive, one that your child showed at a developmentally earlier stage. Children regress when they are stressed, and the behavior they revert to is something that provides them with comfort. A child capable of using full words who begins imitating the *Teletubbies* may just be playing, in which case there is no problem. Kids ought to be allowed to control their own play as long as it is safe. Or, they may be indicating that they are upset. If you take away the *Teletubbies*, you would be removing their source of comfort and failing to deal with the real source of their stress. In such a case, blaming TV blinds us to the real issues and can actually harm a child.

Setting limits is also the best strategy for dealing with the "I-need-it" whine when a child is determined to have something they have seen on TV. With older children we can engage in a discussion about the ways that an advertiser tries to get people to want their product. But a preschooler isn't capable of the abstract thought needed to understand motive. They will never understand the idea that some invisible person who might not have their best interests in mind is trying to sell them something. Nor will they believe that a favorite movie character drinks a particular brand of cola because the cola company paid to have their product in the movie. As they get older, however, you can begin to introduce these ideas as a way of encouraging more critical viewing.

You might also consider purchasing generic, rather than program-based toys. It is natural for children to want to incorporate favorite TV characters into their play, and one or two things connected to those characters can help them do that. But if everything that surrounds them is related to a TV program, kids get the message that the world of TV is extraordinarily important. In addition, children may stop using their imaginations to invent characters and plots that are essential for healthy play and use those fed to them via television instead.

Finally, it is very important to engage your children in conversations about the programs they watch. Not only does conversation help your child gain language skills, it also provides an opportunity for you to convey your values. Most importantly, it models the words that children need to begin to analyze programs for themselves. A simple phrase such as, "I don't like when they do that because..." lets children know that they have the power to reject ideas presented on TV. A question like "I wonder what the Power Ranger's mother felt like when he came home with bruises from the fight?" can open up discussions about actions and their consequences, how TV might not show the whole story, and even how programs make us feel, not to mention provide an opportunity to make up one's own story about a favorite character.

While a child is young, a parent can (and should) be a gatekeeper for what is permitted on the TV screen. But, as children get older, you won't be able to completely control their access to media, especially when they are away from home. The best you can hope for is that when they watch, they have a little voice in the back of their head that says something like, "If mom knew I was watching this, she would ground me." That little voice means they are watching through the filter that you provided. And the only way to provide that filter is to talk with kids about what they watch.

*Conclusion*

It is certainly easier to keep children away from the screen than to learn how to use television well. But doing so robs us of an excellent teaching tool, and it does nothing to prepare children to live in a world where media is everywhere. For children to develop good habits around media, they need to see good habits modeled. We can't do that without using media.

If we don't use media ourselves, children will pick up their media habits from someone else. By making good viewing choices, sharing with children the vocabulary they need to analyze what they see and hear, and making sure that media use is part of a balanced and healthy routine, we give children essential skills for modern life.

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***Faith Rogow, Ph.D. is a media literacy specialist who has served as a consultant to children's education program providers like PBS and Sesame Workshop, and who has trained thousands of parents, teachers, and child care professional across the country to use TV in healthy and educational ways. She is also the national president of the Alliance for a Media Literate America. You can reach her through AMLA's website:*** **www.AMLAinfo.org.**

# Dear Reader

Television and children has long been an interest of mine. It was my area of specialization in graduate school, and I'm convinced that we still don't realize its full impact – both positive and negative.

One thing is certain, however, it's in our lives and our children's lives. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. Faith Rogow, Ph.D. has written one of our finest articles on the complex medium that is television. She tells us the good, the bad, and how to work with that box that dominates our children's lives.

Television broadcasts things other than programming. It beams a dozen (or more) commercials each half hour right to our children. Those products being advertised aren't fresh fruit and vegetables. And while they sell to our youngsters, it's the parents who have to deal with the fall-out in the aisles of the toy store and the supermarket. And now, they're going into our children's schools. Jonathan Rowe, and Gary Ruskin have allowed us to adapt and excerpt from their wake-up article.

Our Health Corner this month focuses on having a healthy baby. Library Resources on fantasy books to stimulate your youngsters' imagination. October is Halloween so we've included some books for the season.

Finally, our BIG news. For several years we've been publishing *P&pN*. As each issue comes out we stand around Jane's desk (because everything important that happens with the newsletter takes place around Jane's desk) and say "we really need to put a book together." In 2004, this will finally happen, thanks to a generous grant from the Child Care Council of Nassau County. The result will be *P&p on Kids*. And, Susan Eaddy, who does our illustrations, designed the cover. It's a real "family" effort.

We'll be telling you more about it in future issues, but we just had to share our happy news. We feel like...proud parents!

Nicole Schwartzberg

# Research News

After our children outgrow baby car seats, intended for children under 40 pounds, they are often still too small for adult lap and shoulder belts. Dr. Beth E. Ebel of the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center at the University of Washington is the author of a recent study on the efficacy of the use of booster seats. She is quoted in the *N.Y. Times* as saying "I think until recently people did not know much about booster seats, so children were graduated directly from the child seat to the adult lap and shoulder belt." Booster seats are intended for children, 40 to 80 pounds, who have outgrown children's car seats but, because of weight or height, are not ready for adult seat belts.

## October 6 through 12 is Fire Prevention Week

The United States Fire Administration says that parents can begin educating children, under the age of 5, right in their homes. It's important because statistics show that children are the cause of 100,000 fires each year and approx. 300 people lose their lives annually due to fires accidentally set by children. Contact **www.usfa.fema.gov** for more information.

# An Important Book

***Predators: Pedophiles, rapists, and other sex offenders – who they are, how they operate and how we can protect ourselves and our children***; Anna C. Salter; Basic Books; New York; 2003; Hardcover $26

Anna Salter, Ph.D. is an expert on sexual offenders and she has written an absorbing, and informative book. She discusses what motivates sexual abusers, why so few are caught, how they deceive their victims and manipulate the system.

Here are some of the facts about the sexual predators that Salter discusses:

- Sexual predators plan their crimes, sometimes weeks and months in advance, singling out and grooming their intended victims.
- They get a thrill from the process. It makes them feel powerful and gives them a rush of excitement.
- They look just like anybody else. Sometimes even more personable and attractive because they have to gain your trust. Having gained our trust, even when children say they've been assaulted, we have a hard time believing that nice man (or woman) could have done something like that.

In describing a young man of her acquaintance, Salter writes: *There is nothing about the way he talks or acts that suggests he is a child molester--which means nothing and changes nothing. I won't leave my children alone with him. "Liking" isn't enough for me to override what my head tells me. He is in a high-risk category, whether I like him or not.*

She also devotes a complete chapter to how to protect children:

- Always attend children's games and send the message that you are an involved parent. Parent involvement protects children.
- Be careful with men who are invested in children's activities yet who do not have children of their own or children of that age. Be doubly concerned if these men aren't married or aren't dating.

It is a book on a horrifying subject, but one that is in some ways, reassuring. If we know to be alert and if we know how they operate, then, perhaps, we can do a better job of protecting our children.



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## How to Have a Healthier Pregnancy

Everyone agrees that a woman's behavior during pregnancy can have a profound effect on the health of her baby. Many factors are linked to healthier pregnancies and more positive birth outcomes.

**Full Term Pregnancies**

Full-term pregnancies produce healthier babies. Preterm birth (before 37 weeks of gestation) and low birth weight (under 5.5 pounds) are associated with infant mortality, illness, and disability.

Smoking, heavy alcohol and drug use and poor nutrition have all been associated with low birth weight, so it is crucial to do all you can to have a full-term pregnancy and a normal weight baby.

**Diet**

Nutritional requirements are greater during pregnancy. Eating healthy foods and eating enough are very important. Some people believe that it's acceptable not to eat quite enough, the baby gets what she needs. However, that's not the case. A mother's diet is crucial for her baby's good health. It's also critical to make sure you have the right vitamins and minerals, particularly folic acid and iron.

**Untreated Illness in the Mother Affects Baby**

Having an untreated sexually transmitted disease or infection can affect the pregnancy and can lead to an infection in the newborn, preterm delivery, and low birth weight baby.

Medical conditions in the mother such as pregnancy-related high blood pressure, diabetes, and anemia are also risk factors for poor pregnancy outcomes. These conditions need to be monitored and treated.

**Don't Smoke**

Certainly pregnancy provides an important reason to give up smoking. A coalition of government and private sector health groups have launched a campaign to encourage all prenatal care providers to help pregnant patients kick the habit. Let your doctor help you quit.

**Excessive Alcohol Can Cause Problems**

When you reach for an alcoholic beverage, beer and wine included, remember that excessive alcohol is associated with low birth weight, and birth defects.

**Recipe for a Healthier Pregnancy**

- Get early and adequate prenatal care to screen for medical conditions, monitor your health and baby's health and development.
- Watch your diet, eating healthy well-balanced meals and taking nutritional supplements as indicated by your doctor.
- Stop smoking while you're pregnant. If you can give it up during your pregnancy you'll be doing something important to help your unborn child.
- Talk to your health care provider about medications (including over-the-counter and herbal preparations) and be very careful of alcohol and other drugs.

**Pregnancy Books**

★ ***Conception, Pregnancy & Birth*** by Dr. Miriam Stoppard; DK Publishing; New York; 2000; Hardcover, $29.95. An updated manual they call the Childbirth Bible, it's very nicely laid out with sidebars containing tips, important facts, and helpful suggestions. There are chapters on baby's prenatal growth and information on what the mother is experiencing, as well as pregnant women's legal rights. Other chapters focus on expectant dads, different childbirth methods, labor experiences, eating and exercise information for mothers-to-be.

🕮 ***Exercising Through Your Pregnancy*** by James F. Clapp III, MD; Human Kinetics; Champaign, IL; 1998; Softcover $16.95. If you've been exercising before your pregnancy and are wondering whether to continue (and for how long into your pregnancy), this is a good book for you to read. Dr. Clapp is a member of the American College of Sports Medicine and director of obstetrical research at Metro Health Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio. The book discusses his research (and that of others) into the effects of exercise, and how appropriate exercise benefits both mother and baby. Chapters also discuss how to develop an exercise regimen for pregnancy and after and when exercise is simply not a good idea.

## THERE ARE NO SAFE LEVELS OF LEAD EXPOSURE

A five-year study has found that lead is harmful to children at concentrations that have typically been considered safe.

Richard Canfield, Ph.D. and his colleagues measured blood lead concentrations in 172 children from 6 months to 60 months of age. They found that the children showed intellectual impairment at a blood-lead concentration below that currently considered acceptable by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "We also found that the amount of impairment attributed to lead was most pronounced at lower levels," said Canfield in the Cornell University press release.

The "safe" level of lead has been continuously dropping. The current level of 10 microgram per deciliter, set in 1991, now may need to be reduced further. "In our sample, most of the damage to intellectual functioning occurs at blood-lead concentrations that are below 10mcg/dl," says Canfield.

• *Intellectual Impairment in Children with Blood Lead Concentrations below 10 ug per Deciliter* by Canfield, RL; Henderson, CR; Cory-Slechta, DA; Cox, C; Jusko, TA; Lanphear, BP. New England Journal of Medicine, April 17, 2003, vol 348:1517- 1526.



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# The Parents' Bill of Rights

## *Helping Moms and Dads Fight Commercialism*

Paul Kurnit is the president of KidShop, an advertising firm that specializes in marketing to children, and he has plans for our kids.

"Kid business has become big business," Kurnit says. To make it even bigger, he preaches what he calls "surround marketing" – saturation advertising that captures kids at every possible moment.

"You've got to reach kids throughout the day – in school, as they're shopping at the mall, or at the movies," says Carol Herman, a senior vice president at Grey Advertising. "You've got to become part of the fabric of their lives."

This is what parents today are up against – corporate advertisers who seek to entwine themselves with children's lives. By most measures, they are succeeding. Each week, the typical American child takes in some 38 hours (yes, a full work week) of commercial media, with its endless ads and come-ons. And that's not counting the ads that commandeer their attention from billboards and the Internet, the omnipresent brand logos, and the advertising that increasingly fills the schools.

Not that long ago, parents actually had control over the front doors of their homes. Sure, a kid might hide a racy magazine under the mattress, but little came into the house without the parents' okay.

The invention of electronic media changed all that. The history of the last century, in fact, could be written as the story of how marketers contrived to bypass parents and speak directly to impressionable children. The front door became a permeable membrane, admitting the advertising industry to its promised land.

As an advertising medium, television is unsurpassed. Children want what they see, and with television advertisers could offer an endless parade of things to want. After Welch's grape juice became a sponsor of the Howdy Doody show in the 1950s, sales of grape juice to families with young children increased almost five-fold.

Increasingly, advertisers had the children to themselves. Few parents sat through Saturday morning cartoon shows. Even shows for general audiences held untapped possibilities. Since kids are the most impressionable audience in the house, why not enlist them as sales agents in regard to everything the family bought? "Eager minds can be molded to want your products!" enthused a firm that produced "education" materials for schools. "Sell these children on your brand name, and they will insist that their parents buy no other."

Corporations literally were alienating the loyalty of children away from their parents and toward themselves. "Think of what it can mean to your firm in profits," Clyde Miller wrote in The Process of Persuasion, "if you can condition a million or ten million children who will grow into adults trained to buy your products as soldiers who are trained to advance when they hear the trigger words 'Forward, march.'"

Soon the commercial saturation of childhood became the new norm, and people hardly noticed any more. An entire industry arose to mold young minds to crave products, and to cast parents into the subordinate role as financiers for these fabricated wants. James U. McNeal, a former marketing professor at Texas A&M University, is perhaps the most influential advocate of modern marketing to children. "[T]he consumer embryo begins to develop during the first year of existence," McNeal writes, without a hint of embarrassment or shame. "[C]hildren begin their consumer journey in infancy and certainly deserve consideration as consumers at that time."

It is not comforting to know, as we cuddle our newborns, that there exists an industry of James McNeals eager to prod them onto their "consumer journey." Nor is it comforting to know that there are marketing consultants, advising corporations on how to harness the "nag factor" to increase sales. Idell contends that nagging spurs about a third of family trips to fast-food restaurants, and of purchases of videos and clothing.

And what about the naggees in this arrangement? Parents exist as deep pockets to be siphoned by kids whose role is to influence purchases. This mentality has become the dominant force with which parents must contend. They encounter it at every turn: They take the kids to a sports event and are barraged by ads. They buy a video for them and find that it is choc-a-bloc with "product placements" – brand-name products that are built into the story.

Parents feel the heavy breathing of the marketers even on their little ones. Teletubbies, for example, is an animated TV show aimed at toddlers as young as one year. The producers portray it as educational. But Marty Brochstein, editor of the Licensing Letter, is more candid, calling Teletubbies a "major big bucks opportunity." The show has done promotions with Burger King and McDonalds. If that's education, it's not the kind most parents have in mind.

The morphing of advertising into life extends even to the schools. Corporations

» » *Continued Page 7*

» » *Continued from "Parents Bill of Rights"*

have taken advantage of tight school budgets to turn classrooms and hallway walls into billboards for junk food and sneakers.

For advertisers, it all has been a bonanza: Market researchers estimate that children ages four to twelve influence some $565 billion of their parents purchasing each year, and McNeal calls children the "superstars in the consumer constellation."

For kids, however, the role of consumer superstars" has meant an epidemic of marketing-related diseases. American kids are fatter than ever, and rates of obesity and type-2 diabetes are soaring.

Added to all this is the production of misery and dissension in the home. Our children are being coached and prodded in the arts of petulance and nagging, by those whose sole purpose is to turn them into conduits for their parents' money.

A survey by the Merck Family Fund found that 86 percent of Americans think that young people today are "too focused on buying and consuming things."

Parents deserve a little more respect. Their job is hard enough without the marketing culture treating them as cannon fodder. The technology of seduction has increased tremendously in sophistication and reach, and corporate seducers have gained new legal rights too. Yet the means for parents to contend with these intrusions, and to talk back to the intruders, have scarcely grown at all. In many respects they have diminished. The time has come to right the balance. The government can't do parents' job for them, but it certainly can give them the legal rights they need to stand up effectively to corporations that target their kids.

Parents should not be second-class citizens. They should not feel under siege by a culture designed to shake them down for money, and to usurp the function of instilling values in their kids. The time has come for a Parents' Bill of Rights.

Excerpted with permission from the article by Jonathan Rowe and Gary Ruskin originally printed in Mothering Magazine, Jan/Feb 2003

Jonathan Rowe is director of the Tomales Bay Institute. Gary Ruskin is executive director of Commercial Alert. Its mission is "to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere and prevent it from exploiting children and subverting the higher values of family, community, environmental integrity, and democracy."

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4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd. #123
Portland, OR 97214-5426

## Parents' Bill of Rights

The Parents' Bill of Rights is a set of legislation to control advertisers' access and influence over young children. If you've ever found yourself in a battle over breakfast cereal, argued with your little one about getting clothing emblazoned with the face of a TV character, or were on the receiving end of whines to get the products they see advertised on television, then this Bill of Rights is for you. "The purpose of the Parents' Bill of Rights is to restore to parents some control over the commercial influences on their kids," says Gary Ruskin, Executive Director of Commercial Alert," and to stop the epidemic of marketing-related diseases, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, alcoholism, and tobacco-related illnesses."

***Some of the legislation being advocated by Commercial Alert (and other organizations) include:***

☑ Commercial-Free Schools Act

"Corporations have turned the pubic schools into advertising free-fire zones," says Commercial Alert. Some schools have guaranteed a certain level of attendance to these paid-for commercial messages, and have required children to watch them. This act makes it illegal for schools to require children to watch these pseudo-educational programs.

☑ Children's Food Labeling Act

Do you know what's in the food your children eat in their local fast-food restaurant? This act requires these chains to label the contents of the food and provide basic nutritional information similar to the information required on packaged food in the supermarket.

☑ Children's Advertising Subsidy Revocation Act

Large corporations spend millions on market and advertising research to create campaigns. This piece of legislation would eliminate federal subsidies and deductions for advertising aimed at children under 12 years of age.

*For more information on the Parents' Bill of Rights contact: Commercial Alert; 4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd.; #123; Portland, OR 97214-5246 - Phone: 503 235-8012*

*You can also send letters in support of the Parents' Bill of Rights through their website:* **www.commercialalert.org**

If you want your kids to be safe and careful on Halloween, you need to be sure that they know the rules. It's not enough to talk to them on Halloween night. They will be too excited to pay close attention and will be more likely to act impulsively when they are overly stimulated. So parents should be prepared to have a complete and focused discussion a few days in advance of Halloween and to repeat all of the rules again just before they leave the house that night. Because kids tend to take more risks on this particular holiday, parents must be sure that their children know what is acceptable, appropriate, and safe behavior.


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# Library Resources

**→ For Parents**

📖 ***"Mommy, I'm Scared:" How TV and movies frighten children and what we can do to protect them*** by Joanne Cantor, Ph.D. Harvest Original (Harcourt Brace & Company); San Diego, CA; 1998; Paperback $13. Cantor is both a parent and a researcher and she includes information from both of her areas of expertise in this book on what scares children, and why. Although some of her findings seem self-evident, much may surprise readers. Some types of content scare older children more than younger peers. She explains how young children understand the world around them, the images they see on TV and in movies, and why our attempts to comfort children can back-fire. A well-written, useful book.

**→ Fantasy and Imagination**

📖 ***Birthday Zoo*** by Deborah Lee Rose; illustrations by Lynn Munsinger; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, IL; 2002; Hardcover $15.95. All the animals are getting into the birthday spirit, in rhyme. The lynx pours the drinks while the sloth spreads out a cloth. And the little boy blows out the candles.

📖 ***DON'T Take Your Snake for a Stroll*** by Karin Ireland; illustrated by David Catrow; Harcourt, Inc.; San Diego; 2003; Hardcover $16.00. Pets can be a disaster, all kinds of terrible things can happen. A chimp can make a mess stringing the Christmas lights. The moose will block the view of people sitting behind him. It's best to go places without your exotic pets.

📖 ***He Saves the Day*** by Marsha Hayles; illustrated by Lynne Cravath; G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York; 2002; Hardcover $15.99. On a race course he skids and swerves, but still wins the race. He saves the ship from pirates and glares down tigers while swinging away on a vine. But when he falls and is carried off by a dragon, it's mom who saves the day.

📖 ***Harry on the Rocks*** by Susan Meddaugh; Houghton Mifflin Company; Boston; 2003; Hardcover $15.00. As a result of a boating mishap Harry the dog ends up on a deserted island. There's nothing on the entire island except one tree, rocks, and one egg. Out of the egg hatches a lizard. Harry and the lizard are happy until the lizard blows fire to cook a fish. The lizard is a dragon, who rescues Harry and brings him back home!

📖 ***How I Became a Pirate*** by Melinda Long; illustrated by David Shannon; Harcourt, Inc.; San Diego; 2003; Hardcover $16.00. An exuberant book about a boy who becomes a pirate and saves the treasure but can't stay because he has to go to soccer practice. Quirky, charming and colorful illustrations enhance the warm and funny story.

📖 ***Re-Zoom*** by Istvan Banyai, Puffin (Penguin Putnam, Inc.) New York; 1995; Softcover $5.99. Pictures in pictures as you slowly zoom out. You'll never suspect where you're going. For added fun, start at the back and slowly zoom in.

📖 ***Thunder Rose*** by Jerdine Nolen; illustrated by Kadir Nelson; Silver Whistle (Harcourt, Inc.); San Diego; 2003; Hardcover $16.00. Described as a black folktale Thunder Rose is a cowgirl heroine for everyone. Born taming lightning and with the power of thunder, she politely names herself Thunder Rose and amazes everyone with her strength and sweet disposition.

**→ Halloween Books**

📖 ***The Ghosts in the Cellar*** by Jacques Duquennoy; Harcourt Brace & Company; San Diego; 1998; Hardcover $12.00. You wouldn't think ghosts would be scared but these four friends become spooked by noises in the cellar. Although not strictly a Halloween story, it's got ghosts who (huddling together) confront each of the scary things and find that they aren't frightening at all.

📖 ***John Pig's Halloween*** by Jan L. Waldron; pictures by David McPhail; Puffin Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 1998; Softcover $6.99. While all his friends go out to trick-or-treat John the Pig stays home too nervous and scared to leave the house. But when the witch falls off her broomstick at his door, he invites her in and together they begin to cook and bake for a party of friendly monsters. McPhail's illustrations add to the fun.

📖 ***Littlebat's Halloween Story*** by Diane Mayr; illustrated by Gideon Kendall; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, IL; 2001; Hardcover $14.95. When can a little bat who lives in a library and loves to listen to stories come down from the attic and join the children? Littlebat waits patiently until the time is right...Halloween!


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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

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NEWSLETTER

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A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

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# ¿Por qué no Apagarla?

## *El Desarrollo de Hábitos Televisivos Sanos*

"Cuando nació nuestro hijo, nos desasimos de nuestra televisión", anunció con orgullo una mujer durante un taller de cultura de medios de comunicación, completamente segura que su acción era evidencia de que era excelente madre. Yo tuve sentimientos encontrados sobre su comentario. Por un lado, siempre es bueno encontrar a un padre que esté tan inquieto sobre su hijo. Por otro lado, todo lo que sé sobre la televisión y el desarrollo de los niños indica que le hizo un flaco favor a su niño.

La televisión es un tipo de tecnología que, en sí, no es ni bueno ni malo para los niños. Si se convierte o no en un problema depende de cómo la usamos. Y aunque es verdad que muchos de nosotros no la usamos muy bien, también es verdad que simplemente apagarla es una solución fácil. Pero como la mayoría de las soluciones fáciles, podría parecer beneficial a corto plazo, pero no ayuda a los niños a la larga.

Hay muchas razones de estar concientes, e incluso preocupados, sobre la televisión y los niños. Cuando los niños miran mucha tele, y en la mayoría de los estudios, "mucha" quiere decir más de 30 horas de tele a la semana, – corren el riesgo de ser obesos y de tener menos éxito en el colegio. Y si lo que están viendo contiene mucha violencia, están a riesgo de actuar agresivamente o de desensibilizarse ante la violencia real.

Por otro lado, no existe ninguna evidencia que la programación educativa bien diseñada y vista con moderación cause algún daño. Por el contrario, puede ser beneficial. El truco es elegir los programas adecuados y aprender como establecer hábitos familiares sanos para verla.

### Sugerencias Para Elegir Programas

La manera más fácil de evaluar un programa es preguntarse una pregunta muy sencilla: ¿Este programa hará mi trabajo como padre más fácil o más difícil? La pregunta no es sobre si tener el aparato encendido o no –casi todos los padres usan la tele como una técnica de distracción en cierto momento- sino, prestar atención a lo que los niños están mirando cuando están en frente de la tele.

Si el programa contradice los valores que estas tratando de instaurar, deja a los niños irritables, produce pesadillas, o imparte conductas peligrosas que los preescolares pueden copiar, entonces el programa está haciendo su trabajo como padre más difícil. Ser padre ya es lo suficientemente difícil. Haga de la tele su aliado, seleccionando programas que refuerzan en vez de debilitar lo que estas tratando de hacer.

Otra manera de probar sin un programa de televisión es apropiado para un preescolar es mirarlo sin sonido. Los preescolares no tienen la capacidad lingüística para poder entender diálogos normales (como el guión de una telenovela o los doble entendidos de una comedia), o la experiencia de comprender parodias (como las de los Rugrats o los Animaniacs), o la capacidad de pensar abstractamente que se necesita para entender las cosas que pasan fuera de pantalla (como la decisión de los Funniest Home Videos de usar videos en los cuales nadie sale lastimado). Por lo tanto, lo que los niños muy pequeños entienden de la tele está basado exclusivamente en lo que ven. Te sorprenderás con algunos de los mensajes cuando le quitas el contexto que las palabras y la experiencia le dan al programa.

### Sugerencias Para Usar Programas

En casi todos los talleres, alguien siempre pregunta, ¿"cuanto tiempo es suficiente"? No hay respuesta fácil a esa

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pregunta porque todo el mundo usa la tele de manera distinta. Sí sabemos que los niños necesitan tiempo para cosas como la conversación, movimiento, y juego libre (solos y con otros). Los niños que bailan con Barney o que conversan con los amigos y la familia sobre lo que ven pueden estar recibiendo algo de lo que necesitan durante su tiempo con los medios. Otros niños quizás no. Todas las familias tienen que integrar el tiempo con la tele de su propia manera para tener una rutina diaria equilibrada.

Pero, no obstante, cuales sean las necesidades específicas de tu familia, hay ciertas cosas que todo el mundo puede hacer para aumentar la posibilidad que el uso de la tele en su hogar sea sano, especialmente para los preescolares:

Reserva el uso del control remoto para los adultos. Permitirle a los niños navegar por los canales garantiza que encontrarán material inapropiado.

No pongas un televisor en la habitación de tu niño. No puedes vigilar lo que están dando en un televisor que no puedes ver. De la misma manera que no permitirías a un extraño estar solo en la habitación con tu niño, no es una buena idea permitirle a tu niño estar solo en una habitación con la tele.

Apaga la tele durante las horas de comida. Comer ante la televisión interfiere con una importante oportunidad para conversación familiar y contribuye a malos hábitos alimenticios.

Graba programas y míralos en cintas de videos o en archivos digitales almacenados. Tener las cosas en cintas te da control total sobre lo que ven los niños y, además, te da la oportunidad de ver otra vez algo que a los preescolares le gusta ver.

Mira programas, no televisión. Encuentra programas que realmente quieres ver y cuando se acabe el programa, apaga la tele. No dejes a los niños que desarrollen el hábito de sentarse y cambiar canales hasta que encuentren algo que toleran ver. No enciendas la tele simplemente para matar tiempo o tener un ruido de fondo.

Evita la programación comercial. Los medios de comunicación pueden actuar como una especie de espejo, dando una imagen de cómo los televidentes supuestamente deben verse a si mismos. Los medios no comerciales y educativos enfocan a los niños como personas valiosas capaces de aprender. Los medios comerciales enfocan a los niños como consumidores. Entre más medios comerciales los niños miran, es más probable que definan su valor por lo que poseen y de medir tu amor por lo que les compras.

Proporciona actividades alternativas. Dada la alternativa entre mirar tele y hacer otras actividades entretenidas, los niños casi siempre optan por hacer otra cosa. ¿Y cual es la actividad favorita de un preescolar? Estar con la mamá o el papá.

## Manejar las Conductas Relacionadas con la Tele

El papá acaba de agarrar a su hijo de cuatro años justo a tiempo para evitar que tire al gato contra la muralla, y después de calmarse explica, "No debes hacer eso. Cuando la gente real hace eso, duele". El niño asiente con la cabeza pareciendo comprender, pero una hora más tarde le está dando una patada de karate a un amigo. Lo que está pasando aquí, en parte, es que el papá ha usado una explicación clara y concisa pero hasta las edades de seis o siete, los niños no son capaces de distinguir entre lo real y lo imaginario, o por lo menos de la manera en que los adultos lo definen. Por lo tanto se necesita algo más como explicación.

Evidentemente, no podemos dejar que estas conductas no se controlen, especialmente si son peligrosas. ¿Qué podemos hacer? Podríamos empezar eligiendo programas que no dan el modelo para conductas peligrosas, pero si eso es lo único que haces y hay otras razones detrás de la conducta agresiva de tu niño, uno puede prohibir la tele pero la conducta va a persistir. Además, no siempre puedes controlar lo que los niños ven, especialmente fuera de la casa.

Consiguientemente, la mejor estrategia es fijar límites. Los niños aprenden a muy temprana edad que los adultos pueden hacer cosas que ellos no pueden, como conducir carros y cocinar en la cocina. También aprenden que pueden hacer en casa cosas que no son permitidas hacer en la casa de la abuela o en el jardín infantil y viceversa. Entonces, cuando tienes un niño imitando conducta televisiva indeseable, fija límites simplemente diciendo algo como, "eso lo hacen en la tele pero no lo hacemos aquí". Puedes y debes explicar por qué, pero para los niños pequeños, esa explicación en si no es suficiente para cambiar conducta.

Si la conducta es sencillamente indeseable, pero no peligrosa, quizás también te puedes involucrar en la fantasía. Si un niño que sabe hablar en oraciones completas empieza a hablar como el Cookie Monster y a decir "Yo querer galleta", quizás puedes conceder que está bien que un monstruo de la tele hable así pero que nosotros hablamos en oraciones completas en la mesa de comida. Si eso no funciona, reconozca que un niño que pretende ser como el Cookie Monster debe estar jugando y únase al juego. Cuando el niño diga, "yo querer galleta", déle una galleta imaginaria. Si quieren una de verdad, ellos rápidamente aprenderán que tienen que decir, "Me puedes dar una galleta por favor".

Puede ser un error prohibirle a un niño ver un programa si la conducta que estás observando es regresiva, una que tu niño demostró en una etapa de desarrollo anterior. Los niños se ponen regresivos cuando sufren de estrés, y la conducta a la cual revierten es algo que les da confort. Un niño capaz de usar palabras completas que empieza a imitar los Teletubbies puede que esté solo jugando, en cuyo caso no hay problema. A los niños se les debe poder dejar controlar su propios juegos con tal que sean seguros. O, pueden estar indicando que están angustiados. Si les quitas los Teletubbies, estarías quitándoles su fuente de confort y no estarías enfrentando su fuente real de su estrés. En este caso, echarle la culpa a la tele nos ciega a los problemas reales y puede lastimar al niño.

Fijar límites también es la mejor estrategia para manejar el lloriqueo de "lo necesito" cuando el niño está determinado de tener algo que ha visto en la tele. Con los niños mayores podemos involucramos en una discusión sobre la manera en que la publicidad trata de hacer que la gente quiera sus productos. Pero un preescolar no es capaz del pensamiento abstracto que se necesita para comprender esta motivación. Nunca podrán comprender la idea que una persona invisible, que quizás no tiene sus mejores intereses en mente, está tratando de venderles algo. Tampoco creerán que un personaje favorito de película toma una marca especifica de bebida porque la compañía de bebidas pagó por tener su producto en la película. A medida que crecen, sin embargo, puedes empezar a introducir estas ideas como una manera de alentar a ver televisión con ojo más crítico.

Quizás también podrías considerar comprar juguetes genéricos, en vez de juguetes basados en programas. Es natural para los niños querer incorporar sus personajes favoritos de la tele en sus juegos, y una o dos cosas relacionadas a esos personajes puede ayudarlos a hacerlo. Pero si todo lo que los rodea está relacionado a un programa de televisión, los niños reciben el mensaje que el mundo de la tele es extremadamente importante. Además, los niños pueden dejar de usar su imaginación para inventar personajes y tramas que son esenciales para el juego sano y en vez usar los que le alimenta la tele.

Finalmente, es muy importante involucrar a tus niños en conversaciones sobre los programas que ven. La conversación no solo le ayuda al niño aprender destrezas del lenguaje, sino que también ofrece una oportunidad de poder comunicar tus valores. Pero lo más importante es que da un modelo que los niños necesitan para poder empezar analizar programas por si mismos. Una frase sencilla como, "no me gusta cuando hacen eso porque....", le dice a los niños que tienen el poder de rechazar las ideas presentadas en la tele. Una pregunta como ¿"Me pregunto que sintió la mamá de los Power Rangers cuando llegó a la casa lleno de moretones después de una pelea"? puede suscitar una discusión sobre las acciones y sus consecuencias y como la tele quizás no muestra el cuento entero, e incluso como los programas nos hacen sentir. Y también nos da una oportunidad de poder tramar nuestro propio cuento sobre un personaje favorito.

Cuando un niño está chico, un padre puede (y debe) ser un guardián de lo que está permitido en la pantalla. Pero a medida que los niños crecen, no podrás controlar completamente su acceso a los medios, especialmente cuando están lejos de casa. Lo que más se puede esperar es cuando miren tele, tengan una pequeña voz en la cabeza que les diga algo como "Si mi mamá supiera que estoy viendo esto, me castigaría". Esa voz significa que están mirando a través de un filtro que tu le has dado. Y la única manera de dar ese filtro es conversar con los niños sobre lo ven.

## Conclusión

Ciertamente es más fácil mantener a los niños lejos de la pantalla que aprender como usar la televisión bien. Pero hacer eso nos roba de una excelente herramienta de enseñanza, y no hace nada para preparar a los niños a vivir en un mundo donde los medios de comunicación están en todas partes. Para que los niños desarrollen buenos hábitos sobre los medios, tienen que observar buenos modelos de hábitos. No podemos hacer eso sin usar los medios de comunicación.

Si nosotros no usamos los medios, los niños van a aprender sus hábitos mediáticos de alguien más. Al hacer buenas selecciones de programación, y compartir con los niños el vocabulario que necesitan para analizar lo que ven y escuchan, y asegurarse que el uso de los medios sea una parte de una práctica sana y equilibrada, le damos a los niños una destreza esencial para la vida moderna.

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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

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NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

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# Disappointment

## *Helping Children Deal With Setbacks*

I can clearly remember the day I learned who was responsible for children's happiness. My husband and I had gotten a baby sitter for our six-month-old daughter and took our six-year-old son Kevin to a special museum display he wanted very much to see.

The outing took six hours. And, except for one incident, we all had a grand time. As we drove up to our house, I asked him how he liked the trip. I fully expected him to say he was delighted since he had both parents' attention for more than six hours – doing something he wanted to do. However, he focused on the only five minutes in the trip that did not go exactly as he wished.

It was then I realized that my son was responsible for his own happiness. Although I could provide wonderful experiences, ultimately I could not make him happy, only he could do that.

Of course we want our children to be happy, but there are pitfalls. If you consistently change activities to prevent or reduce your child's unhappiness, you encourage her to let another person (you) be responsible for her happiness. If you always rush to make life pleasant, you do not give your child the chance to develop the skills she needs to deal with her frustration and disappointment herself.

Although you can't make your children happy, you can help them develop the skills they need to choose happiness and emotional competence. The process is gradual. Parents start by providing comfort, but then you gradually become a teacher and then a coach, helping your children to see the alternatives and choices, and helping them choose wisely.

### Upsetting Events

When children are upset, it is rarely a crisis, although it often feels that way. Rain washes out a special event. An ice-cream sundae falls to the floor. A friend cancels a play date. A child in the midst of hysteria, acting as if the world is falling apart will, at least momentarily, lead a parent to feel that the situation is truly dire.

Before you react, take a few deep breaths and look with adult eyes. How you handle the situation tells your child what behavior is appropriate when he is upset. Children are sensitive to the feelings of their caregivers. Your calmness can help them calm down, although this might not happen quickly. What is certain is that if you become agitated, your children will surely not regain their composure.

If your child is in a tantrum, stomping around the house, the first thing to do is ensure the safety of people and things. Then, acknowledge your child's

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feelings. Although your child may not begin to calm down, this approach is still helpful. It sends the message that feelings are acceptable and helps your youngster distinguish between feelings and actions.

## Identifying Feelings

When children are young they need to have help labeling their feelings, just the way they need help labeling colors, trees, and animals. When you accurately reflect the feeling and the situation to young children you help them in two ways. First, you give children language and words to use about their feelings. Second, you help children separate the feelings from actions or the situations.

For example, when Toni came into the car from day care she banged down her knapsack and yelled at her baby sister. "I see you've slammed your knapsack and yelled at your sister," says Mom in a quiet voice. "I'm wondering if you're upset about something that happened today." This acknowledges the situation and helps the child understand the emotions and its causes.

Notice comfortable feelings as well as uncomfortable ones. Many parents comment on feelings only when they themselves are concerned or irritated. But reflecting on uncomfortable feelings can encourage children to notice and feel these emotions at the expense of the more comfortable ones. So include contentment, happiness, elation and pride as emotions your child can learn to recognize and name.

Finally, emotional reaction is one of gradients or degrees. Feelings can be intense or mild, and many gradations along the way. It's helpful for youngsters to recognize small positive emotions in order to promote their good feelings and negative emotions to recognize warning signs.

You can also help verbalize your own emotions. "I'm frustrated that I can't get the bottle open." This tells youngsters that parents too experience these feelings and allows you to model appropriate behavior.

## Dealing with Uncomfortable Feelings and Difficult Situations

The next step is to help your youngster handle those uncomfortable feelings, and choose alternatives to resolve the situation.

Young children are just learning how the physical world works. They may have trouble stacking blocks, pouring water in a glass, untangling a pull toy, or making a marking pen go where they want. They can do very few things on their own, and must rely on parents, teachers, or older siblings for much of their needs.

Older children also have a hard time making the physical world comply with their wishes – kicking a soccer ball, playing a musical instrument or folding intricate origami. Even though they can take care of more of their needs, they still have to comply with adult rules. All these situations can create uncomfortable feelings.

Sarah, a three-year-old, is upset because her mother will soon be leaving for the evening. One possible strategy is for her mother to help Sarah recognize her feelings and then offer some choices to help Sarah feel better. "Would you like me to read you a story before I go, or give you a hug. Or, I could do both." If Tyrone is angry because he can't have some cookies before dinner his parent can offer, "Would you like a cracker now, and cookies for dessert?" This gives youngsters a sense of control and choice and sets boundaries. The possibilities aren't limitless, asking mom to stay home isn't an option, nor is having a plateful of cookies before dinner.

Other times when children confront dilemmas adults can help them resolve the situation. Helping a child discover the solution definitely takes longer than telling him what to do but letting him figure out an answer helps him learn valuable skills. Children learn how to define the issue, generate alternatives, and test the solutions.

Sometimes the problem is their lack of skill. You can divide the task into small pieces. Teaching a child to tie her shoelaces is a task that can be difficult for children but is easily broken down into individual movements and steps.

Chart progress. Everyone likes to see that they're making progress towards their goal. The number of tries to tie the laces is decreasing.

Take breaks and keep calm. Different children have different levels of tolerance. Be ready to call a halt, or encourage your youngster to monitor her frustration level and take a time-out from learning or practicing a skill.

Sometimes the source of disappointment can't easily be remedied. Instead, parents do what they can to stop their children's distress, and teach coping skills. When a child is upset over a broken crayon you can respond to the child's feelings. Get down to eye-level and say "Oh, no. Your crayon broke. You are stomping around the house. You seem angry. Would you like a hug to feel better?"

Parents can also teach the child how to calm himself. Timothy comes home from preschool upset because one of the children won't play with him.

To most adults, this is part of living. We shrug our shoulders and move on. But children often feel events as deliberately hurtful

toward them. You could suggest to your youngster that it probably wasn't that the other child doesn't like him but rather that he wasn't interested in playing at that time. You can also suggest your child blow out his feelings, in this case taking a deep breath and blowing out his anger. This works particularly well when parents have already used this technique themselves, and both model and teach it to their children.

Another aspect of helping children with disappointment is learning how to fix the problem, once it has occurred.

Caitlin, 4 years old, is crying because the balloon she refused to tie to her wrist has floated away. When Caitlin has calmed down her dad can ask her what they could do so the wind won't be able to pull the balloon out of her hand next time. If she can't come up with suggestions, dad could prompt her by asking if it might be possible to tie the balloon to something to keep it from blowing away. And then let Caitlin come up with where to tie it.

Of course you don't have to wait for a crisis. If you know your youngster is going into a situation that usually provokes distress and disappointment you can prepare your children by going over some of the possible responses available to them.

Acknowledge your children's efforts along the way. Look for and comment on these efforts. Take the opportunity to provide any fine-tuning. When you see a situation brewing, ask your child how he feels, and what he might be thinking of doing to help make things better. Learning rarely takes place in a the middle of a crisis.

Although you can't make your children happy, you can make it possible for your children to choose happiness. You can help your children by modeling ways to deal with their feelings appropriately. You can teach your children the information and skills they need to choose happiness. And as they become more skilled, you can gradually back out and let them be responsible for their own feelings.

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*Elizabeth Crary, author of more than 30 books for children and parents, teaches parenting education at North Seattle Community College and independently. She is frequently requested to speak on parenting issues in the U.S., Canada, and Japan. Among her most popular parenting books are "Without Spanking or Spoiling," "Pick Up Your Socks!," "Love & Limits," and "Dealing with Disappointment."*

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### Staying Calm When Your Kids Are Upset

When children get angry, parents sometimes get angry, too. Other times we get caught up in our children's joy and frustrations.

When parents become emotionally over-involved they often see and feel things as the child rather than maintaining an adult perspective. This hinders their ability to offer their children the necessary support. Further, children take their cues from you; if you're distressed their distress will increase.

#### Remain in charge of your feelings

Sometimes when parents become angry, they blame their anger on their children: "You made me mad when you bounced the ball inside the house," or "How could you have dropped the box of cereal all over the floor? You make me so furious!" In both examples the parent has placed the responsibility for the adult's feelings onto the child. It's hard enough for most children to control their own feelings. It's unfair and inappropriate to add to that the burden of coping with your feelings as well.

#### What can you do?

Remember, your children are watching and learning from you. First, gain control over your emotions. Blow out your anger with a deep breath. Next, think of possible solutions to the problem. Okay, there's cereal all over the floor from your child's careless behavior.

#### The Solution?

Your child made the mess, and can at least help clean it up. Next, determine how to make it less likely to happen in the future. Perhaps teach your youngster how to pour cereal more neatly, after all, it is a learned skill. Keep it on a low shelf so your youngster can reach it without tipping it over. Keep a large plastic container nearby and your child will be able to provide her own snack, without the mess.

*Elizabeth Crary*

**Watch for Coming Months ...**

- A Circle of Loving Care
- The Power of Poetry
- Marital Communication

## *A Parent Muses ...* Helping Children Cope with Failure

As I was testing bread recipes in preparation for writing an article on cooking activities with children, I made several mistakes. First, I tried using a bread dough recipe with honey in it. The result was a sticky mess that I could hardly knead. Frozen bread dough worked much better. I'm sure a traditional bread dough without the honey would also have been easier to manage.

Next, I tried rolling the dough into little balls to put on a cookie sheet. I thought bite-size pieces might be fun! I soon discovered, however, that it was hard to roll bread dough into balls. So I made breadstick shapes instead. My next mistake was to burn the bread sticks. Obviously breadsticks cook faster than loaves of bread. But I had forgotten to reduce the cooking time enough for the first batch.

As I was sitting there, happy to have tried things out before writing the article, I suddenly had a disturbing thought. What exactly do we teach children by providing them with activities that never fail? Would all my hard work leave them with the impression that adults never fail? Or, that an activity has only one goal - to make a perfect product? Or, that we should always try to avoid mistakes?

With this thought, I realized that in my attempt to provide well-planned activities, I was actually keeping children from a valuable learning experience - making a mistake. Mistakes are not inherently bad. Everyone has heard the example of Mr. Goodyear who tried to make rubber hundreds of times before he got it right. If he had let failure stop him, we might all be riding around in cars with metal wheels!

Similarly, research has shown that the children who are good in math are also those who tend to make more mistakes. These children are not stopped by failure. Rather, they continue to explore the problem and search for new solutions. Eventually, they are successful. As a math teacher once told a group of parents gathered to learn how to help their children, "No one ever learned anything by being right!"

One of our jobs as caregivers should be to help children distinguish between mistakes that are "ok" and those that are not. Acceptable mistakes are those that arise through experimentation and creativity, those that result from conditions beyond our control, or those arising from lack of knowledge. One of the most exciting times I had with my youngest son was when his third grade teacher encouraged him to "make up" recipes. I had my doubts when the recipe included 1 cup of salt, ½ cup of peanut butter, and 3 cups of flour. But we tried it anyway. We made faces as the salty taste hit us.

Next, he decided to reduce the amount of the salt and increase the amount of peanut butter. That batch was decidedly better. We kept changing the proportions and adding new ingredients until we had developed a fairly decent peanut butter cookie. And the smile on his face when he had achieved this goal was wonderful!

Of course, children do have to learn to avoid mistakes under some conditions. When the outcome is very important, it is better to be careful. I wouldn't like to fly on an airplane whose pilot took a rather relaxed view of making mistakes during landings. And I definitely don't want my surgeon to make a mistake if he can help it! I have little tolerance of people who make mistakes out of laziness or carelessness.

But most of the time mistakes are a fairly routine part of life. When children make mistakes we need to help them cope effectively. Around eight or nine years kids begin to develop the mental ability to evaluate their products against a standard. They may become very critical of their mistakes. We can help children learn to have a more relaxed attitude about mistakes by:

- Laughing at ourselves when we make mistakes
- Providing enough materials and supplies so children always feel they can start over if they make a mistake
- Reacting calmly when mistakes do happen (e.g., "Oh, well. It didn't turn out. Too bad. We'll try it again sometime.")
- Helping children learn from their mistakes by focusing on what they could do next time to avoid the problem
- Encouraging children to turn their mistakes into successes (e.g., change the odd-looking bird picture into a very colorful free-form design)

It is a terrible burden to feel you can never make a mistake. The next time your activity flops just relax and laugh. Realize that you have just changed the goal of the activity from "developing cooking skills" to "helping children cope with failure."

*Christine M. Todd, Ph.D. is a Child Development Specialist at the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension.*
This article is reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Todd, C. M. (1993). "Helping children cope with failure." In Todd, C.M. (Ed.), "School-age connections", 2(5), pp. 3-4. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.

# Turtle Technique ...

***For Parents & Child Care Providers***

Children often hear adults telling them to "calm down," but it rarely has the intended result. Sometimes it even escalates a child's angry response. "Calm down" describes an end-state: being calm, with no suggestions as to how to get there.

What kids need are strategies and skills to replace angry outbursts with self-regulation. Turtle Technique is one way that has proved helpful.

With preschoolers many accidents occur in their classrooms, playgrounds, and in their homes: other children may bump into them, or knock over their construction. Some children interpret these accidents as purposeful, even hostile actions. One essential step in helping children control their anger is to help them reframe their thinking – to substitute more neutral interpretations of others' behaviors.

The Turtle Technique is a strategy that has been used successfully with preschool and kindergarten-age children. The basic steps are:

- Recognize that you feel angry
- Think "stop"
- Go into your "shell," take three deep breaths, and think calming, coping thoughts. "It was an accident. I can calm down and think of good solutions. I am a good problem solver."
- Come out of your "shell" when calm and then begin to think of some solutions to the problem.

Child-care providers and parents can use this technique with small groups of children as well as one-on-one. You can use a turtle puppet to help keep children engaged. First, introduce the turtle, asking the child or children to say "hello" and petting the turtle gently. Introduce the turtle's special trick for calming down. You can even have the turtle explain a time when she got upset and demonstrate the technique. You can then invite children to practice the turtle's secret. Children can "go in their shell" and take three deep breaths. Then, come out and think of solutions to the problem.

This may take a bit of practice. Individual children can model the "Turtle Technique," for one another. Or, you can practice it with your own youngster. Even become a role model yourself, when you become upset or angry.

The Turtle Technique can even be made into an art project. Children can make paper plate turtles with moveable heads and arms that can go into the shell. Then, rehearse the technique using these paper-plate turtles.

***This information has been adapted with permission from "Helping Young Children Control Anger and Handle Disappointment" by Gail E. Joseph, Ph.D and Phillip S. Strain, Ph.D.*** For more information contact Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois, 800-583-4135, or visit www.csefel.uiuc.edu

# Know Someone Who Is Infant-ticipating?

Need a special gift at this special time of the year? Is there someone on your gift list who is expecting a baby or has just given birth? How about a subscription to the *Parent & preschooler Newsletter*?

Just send us your name and address along with the name and address of your gift recipient. Make your check for $32 payable and mail everything to: *Parent & preschooler Newsletter*; North shore Child & Family Guidance Center; 480 Old Westbury Road; Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215.

We will send your recipient a special gift announcement in your name along with their first issue. This is a really sweet way to say "Congratulations" over and over each month!

# Dear Reader...

One of the sentences my friends often hear me mutter is "my life...his life" complete with hand motions to indicate that my son's life and my life are separate. I certainly want my son to be happy, but I need to keep reminding myself that I am not responsible for making him happy, only for giving him the tools and support to make his own life happy. Oddly enough, my friends all understand, even though our children are young adults.

It seems that at any age, we want to make our children happy -- remove the roadblocks, and smooth the trip for them. That's not a bad thing, but it can backfire when our children don't learn how to make themselves happy, how to remove the roadblocks themselves, and smooth their own ride down the road.

Elizabeth Crary returns with an insightful new feature explaining why kids need to develop these skills and how parents can help.

We've also included tips and experiences of others to round out this important topic.

Included with this issue is our annual "Happy New Year" gift to our readers – our *P&pN* calendar!

This is one of our double issues covering both November and December. So, we'll be back in January, 2004.

We wish everyone a healthy and joyous season, and look forward to a new year rich in love and friendship.

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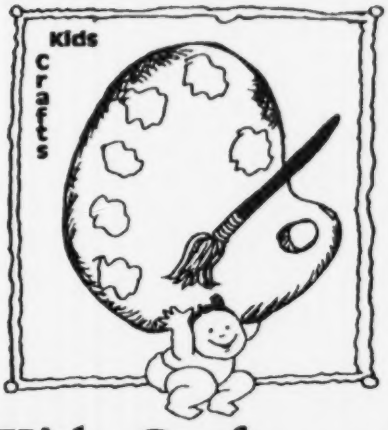


# Kids Crafts

Let your child's creativity shine through these wonderful crafts. They're also a fun and entertaining way to spend quality time together. The secret to unlocking your child's creative potential is to provide an atmosphere that recognizes, rewards, and supports innovation – regardless of outcome. Creativity thrives in an environment that fosters enthusiasm. Given the opportunity, even the budding beginner can display their artistic side.

Allow your youngsters to discover their unique styles as they create keepsakes and make happy memories. And remember children take cues from us so roll up your sleeves and get ready for a crafting adventure – regardless of the outcome!

## Sticker Mania

You'll need: White vinegar; White Glue; Assorted pictures from magazines, catalogs, old books, recycled wrapping paper, and cards.

Children find stickers irresistible. This simple, fun, cost effective craft recipe builds on that interest. Have your children begin by finding pictures as zany and whimsical or as everyday as they wish. Don't hurry your youngster, this is half the fun of the project. Using children's scissors have your child cut the pictures out.

This next part will require your assistance. Help your child mix two parts of white glue to one part white vinegar, mixing well. Then have your child apply this to the back of their pictures. Allow to dry.

While he works ask him why he choose those pictures. This discovery is an important way to get to know your child and for your child to get to know himself.

It's likely your child will spend hours absorbed in the process.

When your child is ready, the stickers are good to go, just moisten the glue side with a bit of sponge or paper towel and press.

## Pudding Paint

You'll need: Instant vanilla pudding; Assorted food coloring; Finger-paint paper; Muffin tin or 6 small dishes.

This sweet surprise is a delightful way to teach children the joys of color. Your child will get to use all of her senses.

Begin by making the pudding according to the directions on the box. Invite your child to assist. Then have your child place several tablespoons of the pudding in each container. Encourage her to measure and count each spoonful, expanding the lesson. Next prompt your child to add one or two drops of food coloring to each container of pudding, mixing well with a small plastic spoon. Depending on the amount of food coloring used the colors will vary.

Children can use her imagination and try to create colors by adding red to the blue, red to yellow, green and blue. This will develop an appreciation for the whole color spectrum. They will be enchanted by the surprise of cause and effect as colors transform before their very eyes. Finally, after making sure hands have been washed clean, let them "finger-paint" with the pudding, tasting as they go along, transforming the fun activity into a tasty treat.

## Fall Window Ornaments

You'll need: Assorted leaves; Wax paper; Iron; Cloth; Hole puncher (optional); Orange, red, yellow ribbon.

Once you have gathered a collection of colorful leaves it's time to press them. Place a leaf between two sheets of waxed paper and cover with a piece of cloth. Use a low setting and carefully iron a pretty leaf between two sheets of waxed paper. Once the leaf is secured between the sheets of paper help your child carefully punch a hole in the top and run a ribbon through it to hang in a window for decoration. Invite your child to make more than one in different shapes of wax paper to add interest. Look up the names of the trees and learn where the leaves originated.

## Bagel Birdfeeder

You'll need: Stale bagel; Peanut Butter; Rolled Oats; Lard; Birdseed; String or ribbon

A good way to learn more about the local wildlife is to make and hang birdfeeders in your yard or on a balcony. Have your child spread equal parts of the lard and peanut butter over the bagel. Now, sprinkle the birdseed and oats over the bagel covering it completely. Finally, run a piece of ribbon or string through the center and tie. It's ready to hang.

You can capture your child's curiosity observing our feathered friends eating from the bagel/feeder by starting a small bird watching journal. Ask your child to describe the differences and similarities and draw pictures to record all fall and winter long. This may even inspire your youngster to become a naturalist.

*Dawn Marie Barbyte*

# Welcome Winter !
# Shiver, Shiver, Burrr!

## Winter Sports

When Old Man Winter comes a'calling and begins to blow icy air into the northern climes, that's the cue for everyone to start thinking of winter sports. Northern states quickly become beautiful winter wonderlands filled with opportunities for outdoor sports and recreation.

The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission estimates that in the United States alone 30,000 skaters, 20,000 sledders, 84,000 skiers and 19,000 snowmobilers will probably require some sort of emergency medical care for injuries during this season.

The New York State Department of Health says that many injuries and accidents can be eliminated with simply being sure that equipment is properly fitted, especially for young children. Even though we sometimes try to purchase equipment that is a little larger than needed so kids can "grow into it" this is often a recipe for injuries since ill-fitting equipment doesn't allow for proper support. It is also important for everyone to be in good physical condition, preparing for winter sports in advance by doing some simple conditioning exercises and stretches. Most important of all, remember to use common sense. If you are not sure that ice is completely frozen or the snow pack is sufficiently hard, just avoid it - never take a chance that it "might" be all right.

This information is provided by the Medical Society of the State of New York. For more detailed information contact your local medical society or your family physician.

## Thanksgiving Books

📖 ***The First Thanksgiving*** by Jean Craighead George; illustrated by Thomas Locker; Puffin Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 2001; Paperback $6.99. Although wordy for young children, this book provides an authentic picture of the settling of the New World and the first Thanksgiving. The Pawtuxet native Americans had good reason to distrust the new settlers, but ultimately provided the assistance that enabled the early Pilgrims to survive.

📖 ***This is the Turkey*** by Abby Levine; illustrated by Paige Billin-Frye; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, IL; 2000; Hardcover. A gentle tale of a turkey that ends up in the fish tank and a family and friends who still give thanks and enjoy their Thanksgiving meal...even turkeyless.

📖 ***An Outlaw Thanksgiving*** by Emily Arnold McCully; Puffin Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 2000; Paperback $6.99. Although fiction, there is some basis in fact for the Thanksgiving, served up by Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, and others. In this charming story a young girl and her mother are snowbound and stranded. Offered assistance by a rancher, they end up sharing Thanksgiving dinner with the courtly, but infamous, outlaws of the old west.

📖 ***A Strawbeater's Thanksgiving*** by Irene Smalls; illustrated by Melodye Benson Rosales; Little Brown and Company; Boston; 1998; Hardcover $15.95. This is a book about the one night a year people in slavery were allowed to celebrate. After the harvest was brought in for the year and the corn was shucked, there was a big party, with music and dancing and delicious food. The term strawbeater describes the person who would tap on the strings with sticks while the fiddler played, adding another layer of complexity to the music.

📖 ***The Thanksgiving Door*** by Debby Atwell; Houghton Mifflin Company; Boston; 2003; Hardcover $15. A warm story about an older couple who find a restaurant open on Thanksgiving Day. Not knowing it was supposed to be a family-only celebration, they walk in and sit down at a table. The family, momentarily surprised, welcome them. At the end, it's revealed that the grandmother left the door open. "In old country, Thanksgiving door is like happy heart, open up big and wide."

## We Fed The Birds

We fed the birds that winter,
My sweet, little daughter and I.
Those tiny sparrows came dancing around the garden
Through the deep, cold snow.
How could they ever survive?
How could those tiny things ever live through this cold, harsh winter?
So we fed them - every day - every day -
Even Saturdays and Sundays when we didn't have to get up so early.
Bread crumbs, old cooked rice, raisins, seeds.
And it soon came that they seemed to be waiting for us on those frigid, early mornings.
When we appeared they didn't fly away.
They just raised up into the branches of the apple tree and,
When the food was down they came down - even if we were still standing there.
And as I watched those tiny birds
I started to feel something different,
It didn't feel quite so cold any more.
I didn't mind that it was so early in the morning.
I was kind of glad it was early and
my child and I could be alone together in that frozen world –
Standing there in the snowy winter dawn
Watching life happen...
Right at our feet.

*Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour*



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# library resources

## Helping Kids

📖 ***Clara Ann Cookie, Go To Bed!*** by Harriet Ziefert; illustrated by Emily Bolam; Houghton Mifflin Company; Boston; 2000; Hardcover $15.00. It's not easy to get Clara Ann to go to bed. But in this thoughtful story, Clara Ann turns to her stuffed animals and tries to get them to go to bed. One little bear steadfastly refuses. As she tries everything she can think of, Clara Ann gradually realizes that being warm and loving works best.

📖 ***Hide, Clyde!*** by Russell Benfanti; ipicturebooks; New York; 2002;(www.ipicturebooks.com) distributed by Little, Brown and Company; Hardcover $17.95. Some skills take a while to develop and Clyde the Chameleon is having a hard time learning how to blend with his surroundings. When he does figure it out he has a wonderful time changing color to match all kinds of backgrounds - vivid, colorful drawings.

📖 ***No Ordinary Olive*** by Roberta Baker; illustrated by Debbie Tilley; Little, Brown and Company; Boston; 2002; Hardcover $14.95. Olive was a loud baby who grows up be quite an individual, creating unusual food combinations and developing her own style of swimming. When she gets to school however, her individuality lands her in trouble, including a visit to the principal's office...where she paints jungle scenes on his desk. The book makes a good case for accepting our children as individuals, even as we remind them of some basic rules.

📖 ***The Sorcerer's Apprentice*** retold by Sally Grindley; illustrated by Homas Taylor; Phyllis Fogelman Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 2002; Hardcover $16.99. The sorcerer's apprentice wanted to learn to be a magician. One day when the sorcerer left him in charge he thought it couldn't hurt to try a bit of magic. Soon he was in big trouble and it got worse every time he tried to fix it. Finally the sorcerer returned, fixed the mess, and gave the repentent apprentice another chance.

📖 ***The Very Clumsy Click Beetle*** by Eric Carle; Philomel Books (Penguin Putnam); New York; 1999; Hardcover $21.99. (with electronic chirper/clicker) The little click beetle is busy crawling and exploring: things click beetles do. Unfortunately it falls on its back and cannot right itself. All the creatures, the snail, turtle, worm, and others encourage the beetle. Eventually, the click beetle succeeds...and the reader hears the electronic chirp/click of a happy click beetle when turning the last pages.

📖 ***What's So Scary?*** by John Stadler Orchard Books (Scholastic Inc.); New York; 2001; Hardcover $16.95. In this whimsical book the illustrator accidently drops a dog into the wrong book. Then, other characters end up on the same page, being chased by a bucket of blue paint. There's adventures as the group tries to make their way to safety (helping one another along the way). All are saved by the quick-witted dog who paints their way to safety.

📖 ***When I Feel Sad*** by Cornelia Maude Spelman; illustrated by Kathy Parkinson; Albert Whitman & Company; Morton Grove, IL; 2002; Hardcover. Told in the first person of a little hamster, this book talks about the things that make children feel sad – when no one let's him play, or when something special is lost and can't be found. "When I feel sad, there are ways to feel better," and this very comforting and helpful book describes some of the things children can do. It ends with the observation "When I feel sad, I know I won't stay sad!"

📖 ***Where is Little Black Kitten?*** by Virginia Miller; Candlewick Press; Cambridge, MA; 2002; Lift-the-flap book $8.99. Bartholomew is very upset, he can't find his little black kitten to take to bed with him. He looks everywhere. "Don't worry. We'll find her," reassures his father. And sure enough, when Bartholomew gets into bed, there's his little kitten.

## Lesson Starters

📖 ***Listen and Learn*** by Cheri J. Meiners, M.Ed.; Free Spirit Publishing; Minneapolis, MN; 2003; Softcover, $10.95. This is a form of how-to book for young children. How do children learn? By listening carefully, watching the speaker, being quiet, and thinking about what is being said - a great way to talk to kids about how to learn.

📖 ***Share and Take Turns*** by Cheri J. Meiners, M.Ed.; Free Spirit Publishing; Minneapolis, MN; 2003; Softcover, $10.95. This book focuses on the social skill of using resources together. It's also an excellent introduction to how and why children need to share. It's a win-win situation.


CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
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PARENT AND PRESCHOOLER

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NEWSLETTER

NORTH SHORE CHILD & FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER

A monthly exploration of early childhood topics from The Lindner Early Childhood Training Institute

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# Desilusión

## *Ayudando a los Niños a Enfrentar Decepciones*

Me acuerdo claramente del día que supe quien era responsable de la felicidad de los niños. Mi marido y yo habíamos contratado una niñera para nuestra hija de seis meses y llevamos a Kevin, nuestro hijo de seis años, a una exposición muy especial, que él tenia muchas ganas de ver.

El paseo duró seis horas. Y, con una sola excepción, todos lo pasaron muy bien. A medida que volvíamos a la casa, le pregunté si le había gustado el paseo. Yo esperaba que me dijera que estaba encantado ya que tenía la completa atención de ambos padres por más de seis horas --- y haciendo algo que él quería. Sin embargo, él se concentró en los únicos cinco minutos del paseo que no fueron de acuerdo a sus expectativas.

Fue entonces que me di cuenta que mi hijo era responsable de su propia felicidad. Aunque yo lograba darle experiencias maravillosas, en ultima instancia yo no podía hacerlo feliz. Solo él podía hacerlo.

Evidentemente que queremos que nuestros niños sean felices, pero hay peligros. Si tu constantemente cambias actividades para evitar o disminuir la infelicidad de tu niño, lo alientas a que otra persona (tu) sea responsable de su felicidad. Si siempre te afanas para hacer que la vida sea placentera, no le das a tu hijo la oportunidad de desarrollar las destrezas que necesita para enfrentar su frustración y desilusión solo.

Aunque no puedes hacer a tus niños felices, les puedes ayudar a desarrollar las habilidades que necesitan para elegir la felicidad y la habilidad emocional. El proceso es paulatino. Los padres empiezan dando confort, y después te conviertes paulatinamente en profesor y después en consejero, ayudando a tus niños a ver las alternativas y las opciones, y ayudándolos a elegir sabiamente.

### Eventos Dolorosos

Cuando los niños están dolidos, muy pocas veces es una crisis, aunque muchas veces pareciera serla. La lluvia echa a perder una evento especial. Un helado se cae al suelo. Un amigo cancela una cita para jugar. El niño está histérico, actuando como si el mundo se fuera acabar. Esto hará que el padre, por lo menos por algunos instantes, crea que la situación es realmente seria.

Antes que reacciones, respira profundo y contempla con ojos de adulto. La manera en que manejas la situación le comunica al niño que conducta es apropiada cuando está alterado. Los niños son sensibles a los sentimientos de sus protectores. Tu calma los puede ayudar a tranquilizarse, aunque esto no pase muy en seguida. Lo que si es seguro es que si tu te agitas, los niños seguramente no se calmaran.

Si tu niño está teniendo una pataleta, corriendo desaforado por la casa, lo primero que hay que hacer es asegurarse de la seguridad de la gente y las cosas. Después, reconozca los sentimientos de su hijo. Aunque su niño no empiece a calmarse, este método es útil. Manda el mensaje que los sentimientos son aceptables y esto ayuda a su hijo a distinguir entre los sentimientos y las acciones.

### Identificando Sentimientos

Cuando los niños son chicos necesitan ayuda para nombrar sus sentimientos, de la misma manera que necesitan ayuda para rotular colores, árboles, y animales. Cuando reflejas con precisión los sentimientos y la situación a los niños chicos, los ayudas de dos maneras. Primero, le entregas a los niños lenguaje y palabras que pueden usar para sus sentimientos. Segundo, ayudas a los niños a separar los sentimientos de las acciones o de la situación.

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Por ejemplo, cuando Antonia entró al carro del jardín infantil tiró violentamente su mochila y le gritó a su hermanita. "Veo que tiraste tu mochila y le gritaste a tu hermana", dice la mamá en voz baja. "Me pregunto si estás molesta sobre algo que pasó hoy". Esto reconoce la situación y le ayuda al niño comprender las emociones y sus causas.

Advierta sentimientos agradables tanto como los desagradables. Muchos padres cometan sentimientos solo cuando ellos están preocupados o irritados. Pero la reflexión de sentimientos desagradables puede alentar a los niños a notar y sentir estas emociones a costa de las más agradables. Por lo tanto, incluya felicidad, bienestar, euforia y orgullo como emociones que su hija pueda aprender a reconocer y nombrar.

Finalmente, las reacciones emocionales tienen rangos. Los sentimientos pueden ser intensos o leves, y con muchos niveles intermedios. Es útil que los niños reconozcan pequeñas emociones positivas para así promover sus sentimientos positivos y las emociones negativas para que puedan reconocer las señales de advertencia.

Tu también puedes ayudar a verbalizar tus propias emociones. "Estoy frustrada porque no puedo abrir esta botella". Esto le comunica a los niños que los padres también experimentan estos sentimientos y te permite enseñar conductas apropiadas.

## Manejando Sentimientos Desagradables y Situaciones Difíciles

El próximo paso es ayudar su niño a manejar esos sentimientos desagradables, y elegir alternativas para resolver la situación.

Los niños pequeños recién están aprendiendo como funciona el mundo físico. Pueden tener problemas en como amontonar bloques de madera, llenar un vaso de agua, desenredando un juguete con cordeles, o hacer que una pluma de marcar vaya al lugar donde quieren. Pueden hacer muy pocas cosas solos y deben confiarse en sus padres, maestros, o hermanos mayores para muchas de sus necesidades.

Los niños mayores también tienen dificultades en hacer que el mundo físico cumpla con sus deseos –patear una pelota de fútbol, tocar un instrumento musical, o doblar un complejo avión de papel. A pesar de que pueden atender más de sus necesidades, aun tienen que observar las reglas de los adultos. Todas estas situaciones pueden crear sentimientos desagradables.

Sara, de tres años, está molesta porque su mamá pronto saldrá. Una estrategia posible es que su madre le ayude a Sara a reconocer sus sentimientos y después ofrecerle algunas alternativas para ayudar a Sara sentirse mejor. ¿"Quieres que te lea un cuento antes que salga, o darte un abrazo? O, podría hacer ambas cosas". Si Juanito está enojado porque no puede comer galletas antes de la cena su padre pueden ofrecer, ¿"Quieres comer una galletita ahora y los dulces para el postre"? Esto le da a los niños una sensación de control y de opciones y fija límites. Las posibilidades no son infinitas. Pedirle a la mamá que se quede en la casa no es una opción, ni tampoco comer un plato de dulces antes de la cena.

Otras veces cuando los niños enfrentan dilemas, los adultos los pueden ayudar a resolver la situación. Ayudar a un niño a descubrir la solución ciertamente requiere más tiempo que decirle que debe hacer. pero dejarlo descifrar la respuesta le ayuda a desarrollar valiosas habilidades. Los niños aprenden a definir el problema, generar alternativas, y probar soluciones.

A veces el problema es falta de habilidades. Puedes dividir la tarea en pequeños segmentos. Enseñarle a un niño a atarse los cordones de los zapatos es una tarea que puede ser difícil para los niños pero se puede dividir fácilmente en pasos y etapas individuales.

Anote el progreso. A todos les gusta ver que están progresando hacia su meta. El número de intentos para atar los cordones está disminuyendo.

Haga pausas y manténgase tranquilo. Distintos niños tienen distintos niveles de tolerancia. Esté listo para detenerse, o aliente a su niño a monitorear su nivel de frustración y tome receso de asimilar o practicar una técnica.

A veces la causa de la frustración no puede ser fácilmente remediada. En cambio, los padres hacen lo que pueden para contener la angustia de sus niños, y enseñan habilidades del manejo de situaciones. Cuando un niño está triste porque se le rompió un lápiz tu puedes reaccionar a los sentimientos del niño. Baje a nivel de sus ojos y diga "Oh, no. Se te rompió el lápiz. Andas dando golpes por la casa. Parece que estás enojado. ¿Quieres un cariño para que te sientas mejor"?

Los padres también pueden enseñarle al niño a como calmarse. Tomás llega a la casa del jardín infantil dolido porque uno de los niños no quiere jugar con él.

Para la mayoría de los adultos esto es parte de la vida. Nos encogemos de hombros y seguimos adelante. Pero los niños a menudo sienten estos eventos como agravios personales hacia ellos. Le puedes sugerir a tu niño que seguramente no era que al otro niño no le gustaras sino que no estaba interesado en jugar en ese momento. También puedes sugeride a tu niño que se quite sus sentimientos, en este caso respirando profundo y expulsando su rabia. Esto funciona especialmente bien cuando los padres ya han usado esta técnica, y pueden modelarla y enseñársela a sus niños.

Otro aspecto de ayudar a los niños a sobreponerse de su desilusión es aprender a

arreglar el problema, después que ha sucedido.

Catalina, de cuatro años, está llorando porque el globo que se negó a atar a su muñeca se ha escapado. Cuando Catalina se halla calmado su padre le puede preguntar que pueden hacer para que el viento no se lleve el globo de su mano la próxima vez. Si a ella no se le ocurre una sugerencia, el papá podría sugerirle preguntándole si es posible atar el globo a algo para que no se vuele. Y entonces deja a Catalina encontrar un lugar a donde amarrarlo.

Evidentemente no tienes que esperar una crisis. Si tu sabes que tu niño va a ponerse en una situación que generalmente produce ansiedad y desilusión puedes preparar a tus niños repasando algunas de las posibles respuestas que tienen a su disposición.

Reconoce los esfuerzos de tu niño durante la trayectoria. Busca y comenta estos esfuerzos. Usa la oportunidad para afinar las cosas. Cuando ves una situación que se avecina, pregúntale a tu hijo qué siente, y qué puede estar pensando hacer para mejorar las cosas. El aprendizaje pocas veces ocurre en medio de una crisis.

Aunque no puedes hacer que tus niños sean felices, puedes hacer posible que tus niños opten por la felicidad. Puedes ayudar a tus niños siendo el modelo de maneras para manejar sus sentimientos apropiadamente. Puedes enseñarle a tus niños la información y las habilidades que necesitan para elegir la felicidad. A medida que adquieren habilidades, paulatinamente puedes alejarte y dejarlos ser responsable de sus propios sentimientos.

***Elizabeth Crary es autora de más de 30 libros para niños y padres, y enseña educación sobre ser padres en North Seattle Community College , e independientemente. Frecuentemente se le pide que hable sobre temas de paternidad en los Estados Unidos, Canadá y Japón. Entre sus libros más populares están Without Spanking or Spoiling, Pick Up Your Socks.! Love and Limits, y Dealing with Disappointment.***

## Mantenerse Tranquilos Cuando los Niños Están Enojados

Cuando los niños se enojan, frecuentemente los padres también se enojan. Otras veces nos involucramos en las alegrías y frustraciones de los niños.

Cuando los padres se involucran demasiado emocionalmente, frecuentemente ven y sienten las cosas como su niño en vez de mantener una perspectiva de adulto. Esto impide su habilidad de ofrecerle a sus niños el apoyo necesario. Además, los niños captan ejemplos de ti; si tu estas angustiado su angustia aumentará.

### Permanece en Control de tus Sentimientos

A veces cuando los padres se enojan, le echan la culpa de su enojo a los niños: "Me hiciste enojarme cuando jugaste a la pelota dentro de la casa", o "Como pudiste dejar caer la caja de cereales en el piso. Me pones furioso". En ambos ejemplos el padre ha puesto la responsabilidad de los sentimientos del adulto en el niño. Es suficientemente difícil para la mayoría de los niños controlar sus propios sentimientos. Es injusto e inapropiado agregarle la carga de tus propios sentimientos.

¿Qué puedes hacer? Recuerda, tus niños te están observando y aprendiendo de ti. Primero, controla tus emociones. Expulsa tus emociones con un profundo respiro. Después, piensa sobre posibles soluciones al problema. Bien, hay cereal en todo el piso debido al descuido de tu niño. Incluso pueden haber migas de cereal.

¿La solución? Tu niño dejó la embarrada y lo menos que puede hacer es ayudarte a limpiarlo. Después, determina como hacer para que sea menos probable que esto ocurra en futuro. Quizás enséñale a tu hijo como verter el cereal más cuidadosamente, que, después de todo, es una habilidad que se aprende. Mantenlo en una repisa baja para que tu niño lo puede alcanzar sin botarlo. Ten un recipiente de plástico cerca y tu niño podrá buscar su propia merienda sin dejar una embarrada.

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